

Thompson Chain of Lakes Draft Management Plan Update



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

2006



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thompson Chain of Lakes (TCL) has an extensive history of public recreational use, which began while under the ownership of private companies. In an attempt to preserve the recreational access, the Conservation Fund, part of Richard King Mellon Foundation, purchased the land from Champion International. The title to Thompson Chain of Lakes (TCL) was transferred to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks following the adoption of the TCL Management Plan and Environmental Assessment in 1993. As addressed in the 1993 plan, TCL was designated as a fishing access site (FAS) and was set forth to maintain the historic camping and recreational uses of the area, as well as habitat and other natural resource values such as wetlands, water quality, and wildlife. Since 1993, a number of land exchanges and purchases have occurred, bringing the TCL complex to 2,981.48 acres. The FWP Commission voted to require camping fees at TCL in 2002, and a fee schedule was implemented in 2004.

In 2002, as the ten-year mark of the original TCL Management Plan approached, the TCL Oversight Committee began to assist in the planning process. The committee met several times to discuss and identify issues facing TCL that would later become key parts of the updated management plan. In addition, a survey was completed to gain public input regarding the management of TCL. This plan concentrates on the issues facing TCL and identifies management actions for addressing them over the next ten years. The plan is intended to be a management guide and thus is subject to funding and personnel availability. In 2011, the plan will be reviewed to monitor implementation progress and make any necessary adjustments and revisions.

The Planning Issues

1. Site Capacity

TCL's current numbering system and capacity limits are confusing and complicated for both visitors and FWP personnel, thus making capacity compliance difficult. In addition, FWP has limited data regarding past and current use. Past surveys and tracking methods of occupancy throughout the TCL complex have been limited and only indicate overall use trends.

Management Objectives:

- 1) Simplify the current capacity system by designating separate campsites.
- 2) Create areas to be used for group camping sites.
- 3) Implement a simpler numbering system to designate individual campsites and group campsites.
- 4) Revise signage at self-pay stations to reflect changes in fee schedule, campsite designation, and group camping areas.
- 5) Develop and implement reliable methodology of tracking occupancy and visitation at TCL.

2. Site Protection

TCL's campsites and day use sites suffer from severe resource impacts due to heavy use, a lack of site delineation, and traffic control methods.

Management Objectives:

- 1) Implement traffic control measures to delineate site boundaries.
- 2) Prioritize and implement site maintenance techniques and restoration projects.
- 3) Initiate a systematic process of surveying TCL boundaries, with priorities on those that border private parcels.

3. Roads

Several main and secondary access roads throughout the TCL complex are in very poor condition and are exhibiting signs of rutting, erosion, and braiding. In addition, several two-track spur roads have been pioneered since FWP acquisition.

Management Objectives:

- 1) Improve primary and secondary recreational access roads.
- 2) Create and implement a road maintenance plan to ensure access to recreational sites.
- 3) Inventory and map all secondary roads in TCL with the purpose of identifying recently pioneered routes and to prevent further pioneering.
- 4) Secure legal access to all roads in the TCL complex.

4. Noxious Weeds

TCL suffers from a severe infestation of noxious weeds, with spotted knapweed the most prevalent. TCL is being managed under the Region One weed management program; however, past control measures have been limited by funding. FWP spends approximately \$4,000 per year in weed management at fishing access sites region-wide. In addition to terrestrial weeds, aquatic weed monitoring needs to continue.

Management Objectives:

- 1) Significantly increase the integrated weed control throughout the TCL complex.
- 2) Inventory and map noxious weeds throughout TCL.
- 3) Develop a comprehensive, integrated weed management program.
- 4) Inform and educate the public at TCL about noxious weed control.

5. Financial and Human Resources

Funding and staffing levels for TCL are inadequate to perform a sufficient level of site and facility maintenance.

Management Objectives:

- 1) Create a separate and distinct TCL budget outside of the standard FAS budget, so that operation costs and budget requests can be more accurately studied.
- 2) Increase allocated FTE to current positions at TCL, and study the feasibility of creating a TCL manager position.

6. Forest Health

The TCL complex contains a mix of forest stands, ranging from old growth ponderosa pine and western larch found predominantly around the lakeshore, to cutting units dominated by moderately sized trees and heavy Douglas fir regeneration.

Management Objectives:

- 1) Where applicable, implement recommendations from the *Hazard Tree and Forest Health Environmental Assessment*.
- 2) Manage TCL's forests for forest health, quality and diversity of fish and wildlife habitats, and fuels mitigation according to recognized defensible space criteria.

7. Trails

Several user-created single-track and two-track trails have appeared since the 1993 management plan was written. The public created these trails for the purpose of motorized recreation. In 2001, these trails were signed as closed to motorized use, while still allowing for nonmotorized recreation. This closure was consistent with FWP's policy of limiting all motorized use to authorized roads on all FWP-owned lands. Since the closure, FWP has received requests to develop a trail system for motorized use in addition to the existing nonmotorized opportunities.

Management Objectives:

- 1) Determine if an OHV trail system is considered as an acceptable and compatible recreational use within the TCL complex.
- 2) Gather public opinion on creating an OHV trail system.
- 3) Determine the type, location, and extent of an OHV trail system to provide, while also recognizing the need for developing formal, nonmotorized trail opportunities.
- 4) Secure funding to develop, maintain, and monitor a motorized and non-motorized trail system.
- 5) Explore possibilities of creating a larger, interlinking motorized and non-motorized trail system with adjacent land management agencies in the TCL area.

8. User-Constructed Facilities

Several user-constructed facilities currently exist throughout TCL. Many of these facilities were constructed and placed prior to FWP ownership and include such things as rope swings, plywood picnic tables, pallet and plywood docks, outhouses, primitive shelters, etc. Many of these structures are dilapidated and unsafe and may pose a threat to public safety and ultimately to FWP legally.

Management Objectives:

- 1) Inventory and prioritize the removal or replacement of all user-built structures based on safety hazards.
- 2) Systematically remove or replace the user-built structures that are deemed as unsafe for public use and pose a threat of liability to FWP.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks would like to recognize the Thompson Chain of Lakes Oversight Committee for their contributions during the planning process. Without the committee members' dedication to the process and their resources and innovation, the plan would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

The Thompson Chain of Lakes (TCL) Fishing Access Site (FAS) is located in Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) administrative Region One, halfway between Kalispell and Libby. TCL stretches for 20 miles along U.S. Highway 2 West and includes numerous small lakes and wetlands. The fishing access site encompasses 2,981.48 acres and includes shoreline access to 18 lakes, 13 of which are completely surrounded by public land. Of these lakes, seven are larger than 35 acres, with depths reaching 160 feet. Camping, fishing, and boating are historical uses around the lakes. Currently, TCL has 60 designated camping areas, with an overall capacity of 152 camping units.

In 1993, following the completion of the TCL Management Plan and Environmental Assessment, the land was deeded over to FWP for management. FWP routinely attempts to update management plans every ten years, and accordingly this is an update to the original plan. This update attempts to address current issues and proactively prepare for developing issues.



Fall at the Thompson Chain of Lakes

THOMPSON CHAIN OF LAKES FISHING ACCESS SITE MISSION

TCL's mission as a fishing access site is to provide recreational and fishing opportunities, while protecting the resource. In regard to fishing access sites, the 2020 Vision for Montana State Parks states:

The level of development for public use varies from site to site. Generally, the FASs are developed to the minimal level necessary to make them usable to the public, while protecting them from resource degradation. The wide range in the levels of site development ensures a diversity of recreational opportunities.

In addition to FAS goals, TCL has a commitment to management for wildlife habitat, based on the use of Wildlife Mitigation funding in the land trade with Plum Creek in 1998. Therefore, care must be taken during planning, development, and routine operations to consider impacts to wildlife on an equal footing with recreational needs. This is particularly true around Upper Thompson Lake and the areas on the back of Crystal and Horseshoe Lakes.

The TCL mission is also guided by the original 1993 TCL Management Plan, which outlines the public's desire, based on public comment during the planning period, to "leave things just the way they are." This is further broken down into the following components:

- 1. Maintain the dispersed nature of the recreational experience.*
- 2. Maintain the relatively undeveloped nature of the existing recreational resource, allowing close "contact" with nature in most locations.*
- 3. Maintain or improve current water quality by preventing further degradation.*
- 4. Manage to maintain forest cover and mixed conifers.*
- 5. Allow relatively easy access to campsites and boat ramps.*

The management goal defined in the preferred and adopted alternative of the 1993 TCL Management Plan specifically states:

Thompson Chain will be managed as a fishing access area for traditional dispersed recreation use, with management and development consistent with FWP's fishing access program. The focus will be on protecting the resource and providing public access for the purpose of boating and fishing (i.e., boat ramps, parking and road improvements, vault toilets, signing, and fencing). Picnic facilities, camping improvements, hiking and canoe trails, interpretive materials or signing, and/or educational centers are generally not part of this program. However, because of the use of TCL for picnicking and camping, these uses will be allowed to continue and facility improvements are not precluded. FWP may adopt special regulations for TCL if necessary to implement management goals.

Public attitudes have shifted slightly since scoping efforts in 1993 in regard to road and campsite conditions. Long-term impacts have resulted in severely damaged roads and expanded campsites in locations throughout the complex. The goal is to continue to provide for the variety of recreational opportunities that currently exist, while leaving the area in a primarily natural and primitive state. Management actions will be aimed at preventing or correcting severe damage to recreational facilities.

ABOUT THOMPSON CHAIN OF LAKES FISHING ACCESS SITE

History

The Thompson Chain of Lakes is named for a Canadian trader and explorer, David Thompson, who worked for the Hudson Bay Company and Northwest Company. Following the Fisher River east, Thompson passed through the area on May 23, 1811, writing journal entries describing the lakes and surrounding land features.

In 1889, Zachariah Sales built the first known family homestead along the Thompson River a few miles southeast of Lower Thompson Lake. By the early 1900s, approximately ten homesteads occupied the Chain of Lakes area.

A forest service land use classification map from 1914 shows what is now considered old Highway 2. At the turn of the century, this road was referred to as the “Interstate Auto Highway.” In the early 1930s, rerouting and construction of the present-day Highway 2 between Libby and Kalispell began, and by 1937 it was completed. A specific stretch of the old Interstate Auto Highway that was rerouted and abandoned includes the road that is now the main access road running north of Horseshoe Lake and south of Loon Lake.



Horseshoe Lake

With the completion of the new and improved U.S. Highway 2 West, access to the lakes by the public from the communities of Libby, Kalispell, and Marion was vastly improved. In the early 1950s, Anaconda Copper and Mining Company (ACM), the major landowner at the time, began construction on the present day ACM main haul road. Upon completion in 1952, the first logging operations began in the area surrounding the lakes. The ACM road, combined with construction of additional logging roads, further added to the ease and convenience of access to the lakes for recreation. Over the years, the public began to pioneer access sites along the lakes. All of the campsites and day use sites within present day TCL FAS were established through public use.

Champion International, a timber company that owned most of the lakeshore and surrounding uplands of the TCL complex, announced in early 1990 that they were selling all of their properties in Montana. Later that year, Champion approached FWP regarding a bargain sale/donation of their lands in the Thompson Chain of Lakes area for conservation purposes. FWP was very interested; however, it needed time to investigate funding for acquisition and future management of the property. Anticipating that public recreational access would be lost if Champion sold to private developers, The Conservation Fund (Virginia-based conservation organization) stepped in and agreed to purchase the property. The value of the property was appraised at \$4,000,000. On June 12, 1990, the Conservation Fund, a member of the Richard King Mellon Foundation, purchased the land from Champion for \$1,000,000, and Champion

donated \$3,000,000 in value. The Conservation Fund held title to the property until FWP developed an acceptable management plan for the area, at which time title would then be transferred permanently to FWP. During the interim, the Conservation Fund leased the property to FWP.

In November of 1993, FWP completed the Thompson Chain of Lakes Management Plan and Environmental Assessment, and the property title was transferred to FWP. The 1993 plan outlined four different management alternatives and adopted the preferred alternative. According to the 1993 plan, TCL would be managed as a fishing access site and thus be developed only to the point necessary to ensure public access, while protecting the resource.

Based on site inventories conducted in 1991 and 1993, FWP and the TCL Oversight Committee developed the Thompson Chain of Lakes Inventory and Guidelines for Recreational Planning and Environmental Assessment in 1995. Using the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) process, three alternatives were proposed in the plan for future development of the TCL area. Option I was the no-action alternative, Option II was the 5-site option alternative, and Option III was the diverse opportunity alternative. After a lengthy public process, a decision was made in April of 1996 to implement Option III, which is defined in the Thompson Chain of Lakes Inventory and Guidelines for Recreational Planning:

This option provides a more diverse spectrum of recreation management opportunities than Option II. Besides development of the facilities listed in Option II, some sites would be closed, other sites restricted to boat-in or walk-in access. A set carrying capacity is established, and management options established for when these capacities are exceeded.

Future development plans were identified for each site, along with a specific capacity for each site within this plan. Capacity limits were determined based on site data collection in 1991 and 1993, including area size, bare ground area, observed use, and user-made improvements.

As proposed in the 1993 plan, FWP continued efforts to acquire shoreline lands around the remaining lakes at TCL. Accordingly, a land exchange was proposed between FWP and Plum Creek Timber Company (PCT). This proposal was the result of a 1995 land survey completed by PCT after the purchase of land from Champion International Corporation. In 1998, following the decision notice on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Thompson Chain of Lakes Land Exchange/Purchase between Plum Creek Timber Company, L.P. and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the exchange occurred and secured valuable wetland and shoreline property at TCL. The project consisted of 1,590 acres of FWP uplands being traded for 570 acres of PCT lakeshore lands. The exchange also included a purchase amount of \$111,650 to be paid to PCT by FWP, out of the Wildlife Mitigation Trust Fund, in order to balance the appraisal values of the traded lands. The trade, which concluded December 1998, reduced the total acreage at TCL to 2,897.83.

Following the land trade with Plum Creek Timber Company, an environmental assessment was completed in 1999 regarding site designation and future development plans on the acquired property. The decision was made to designate specific sites, which were then assigned capacity limits.

In August 1998, an environmental assessment was completed regarding the land acquisition of Boisverts on McGregor Lake. 3.65 acres were purchased and later developed as a day use site, including a boat ramp, vault toilet, and host pad.

Little McGregor Lake FAS was improved as outlined in the 1996 Thompson Chain of Lakes Inventory and Guidelines for Recreational Planning. After the completion of an environmental assessment in 2001, an additional 80 acres was acquired to improve the public access to the lake, the road was improved, a vault toilet was provided, and the campsites were delineated.

For ten years the state FAS program provided funding for TCL operations. In 2002 the FWP Commission voted to require that camping fees be charged at TCL for the purpose of providing revenue to contribute to FAS operational expenses. Implementation of the fee system was discussed at length with the TCL Oversight Committee, and in the spring of 2004, signing and self-pay stations were installed at TCL camping access points. A total of 16 fee stations were installed in 2004, with up to 5 additional stations planned for future installation.

In 2004, a new recreation warden district was created encompassing the TCL FAS and surrounding area. This position required a background in recreation management, since a primary focus throughout the summer months would be recreation law enforcement. The position was filled in July 2004. A substantial increase in nighttime patrols has occurred, resulting in successful convictions on tree theft, vandalism, property destruction, and disorderly conduct.

Geography and Resources

TCL is most notable for its vast amount of water-based recreation opportunity and wildlife habitat. Twenty of the twenty-one lakes included in the Thompson chain offer angling opportunities.

A variety of game fish have been stocked by FWP in many of the lakes at TCL to supplement native populations. Stocked species include rainbow trout, lake trout, bass, and kokanee salmon. In addition, illegal transplants of northern pike and yellow perch have occurred throughout the TCL complex. The Thompson Chain of Lakes Fisheries Management Plan, adopted May 1997, gives further detail and management strategies for TCL fisheries.

Several of the lakes are suitable for waterskiing and other motorized recreation, while all of the lakes offer swimming and nonmotorized boating opportunities. TCL is situated in close proximity to large tracts of national forest and private timberland that is open to public recreation and hunting.



Common Loon

The Thompson Chain of Lakes area provides either permanent or seasonal habitat for a large variety of wildlife species. Bald eagles, common loons, goshawks, and ospreys are frequently observed. Common loons are considered a sensitive species by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and therefore nesting areas are signed to prevent loon disturbance. Common larger species are white-tailed deer, elk, moose, coyotes, and black bears. A variety of waterfowl, songbirds, owls,

amphibians, and rodents inhabit the TCL complex. Although there have not been regular sightings, gray wolves have expanded throughout the northwest and have occasionally been seen in the TCL area. The nearest wolf pack is the Fish Trap pack, consisting of approximately nine wolves based on the fall 2005 count. Data collected from radio-collars reveals that the far northeast corner of the pack's home range overlaps into the TCL complex.



Gray Wolf

Native grasses, forbs, and shrubs are becoming threatened by the increasing presence and spread of noxious weeds such as spotted knapweed. TCL is primarily forested, with the dominant species of Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, and western larch. In the past, timber harvest has occurred throughout TCL by the former landowners, Plum Creek Timber Company and Champion International Timber Company. There is evidence of previous harvests; however, aside from individual hazardous tree removal, no large-scale harvests have been completed since the acquisition of TCL by FWP. The Thompson Chain of Lakes Forestry Project Environmental Assessment was recently approved for the TCL area. The purpose of the project is to promote forest diversity and reduce fuels. As a result, forestry work is currently being planned on three separate locations in TCL.

Facilities and Infrastructure

TCL currently has 60 designated camping areas, with a total capacity of 152 camping units. According to the Biennial Fee Rule, "a 'camper unit' is defined as any sleeping device, such as a tent, motorhome, camping bus, pull-type camper, or trailer, designed and commonly used for sleeping." Currently each designated camping area has a posted camping unit capacity based on traditional use and size limitations. For example, camping area C3 on Lower Thompson Lake has a camping unit capacity of 12 camper units, while the much smaller camping area E1 on Upper Thompson Lake has a posted capacity of 3 camping units. Each camping area has one or more metal fire rings, and some are equipped with picnic tables as well; however, many of these tables were user-built and have not been approved by FWP. There are currently 16 fee stations throughout the complex, with 2 more being installed by the summer of 2006. These fee stations include a fee box, regulations board, and information board. There are three day-use-only areas within TCL that include a day use regulation board and an information board.



Fee Station at the Thompson Chain of Lakes

These day use sites are at Banana Lake and McGregor Lake.

Permanent vault toilets have been installed at 16 heavily used locations throughout TCL. In addition, from April through October FWP leases 13 portable toilets.

Boat ramps have been installed at Little McGregor Lake, Boisverts on McGregor Lake, the Peninsula on Lower Thompson Lake, Upper Thompson Lake, Horseshoe Lake, and Loon Lake. Boisverts on McGregor Lake provides a dock as well.

There are two host pads at TCL; one is at the Peninsula on Lower Thompson Lake and the other is at Boisverts on McGregor Lake. The host pads each have electric, phone, water, and sewer hookups for volunteer hosts. The hosts do routine maintenance and act as contacts for visitors during their stay at TCL.

Many user-built facilities exist throughout the TCL complex. These consist of five rope swings, various picnic tables, and a small pavilion-like shelter. Since acquisition by FWP some of these structures have been removed due to safety concerns. User-constructed facilities are discussed in the issue section of this plan.



**Rope Swing on
Leon Lake**

Operations

All of the camping sites throughout the TCL complex are open year-round. Snowplowing is not performed; therefore some sites may be inaccessible throughout the winter. Hosts are on staff at TCL from May through September.

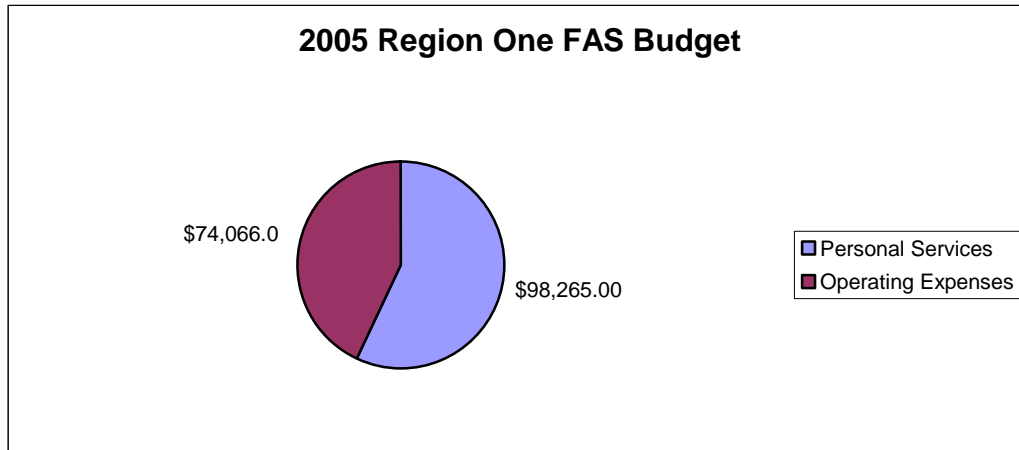
Staffing and Organization

TCL is part of the Fishing Access Site Program, which is managed by the Parks Division of FWP. There are over 300 fishing access sites across Montana. The state is divided into seven administrative regions, each having a local headquarters and Parks Division office. Region One, northwest Montana, has a Parks Division program manager and is further divided into two districts, each having a district park manager and a seasonal park ranger. In 2004, a part-time seasonal laborer position was initiated at TCL to perform routine maintenance throughout the complex. The FTE for this position was redirected from other FAS maintenance programs.

Funding And Revenue

Since TCL is classified as a fishing access site, it does not have a separate budget, as does each state park unit. TCL shares an aggregate budget for the 32 fishing access sites across Region One. The total budget allotted for all of Region One's fishing access sites for fiscal year 2005 was \$172,330. Of that total, \$98,265 was allotted for personal services, which includes wages and benefits for personnel. Additionally, funding is spent through the Enforcement Division for a warden whose district encompasses TCL. The balance of \$74,066 was allotted for regionwide FAS operating expenses, which include supplies, materials, travel, utilities, repair, routine and major maintenance, noxious weed spraying, dust abatement, facility repairs, and miscellaneous expenses.

Table 1. 2005 Region One FAS Budget



Revenue received at TCL, usually in the form of camping fees, is deposited into the statewide fishing access site fund. Total revenue in 2004 at TCL was \$21,732.97, and in 2005 it totaled \$22,576.55.

Visitation

Fishing access visitation estimates have typically been based on electronic traffic counters placed at ingress/egress locations in Region One sites. Due to numerous entry points spread over a wide geographical area, compounded by shared roads and non-FAS-related traffic, this methodology has not been heavily employed at TCL. Instead, visitation surveys by summer interns, comparisons to Logan State Park located in the center of TCL, and monitoring of select traffic counter sites in TCL have been used to identify visitation trends.

Visitation at Logan State Park and the FAS campsite on the Peninsula of Lower Thompson Lake have proven to be good indicators of overall visitation at TCL. The following tables highlight a trend toward increased visitation at TCL during the past three seasons.

Table 2. Logan State Park Visitation 2003-2005

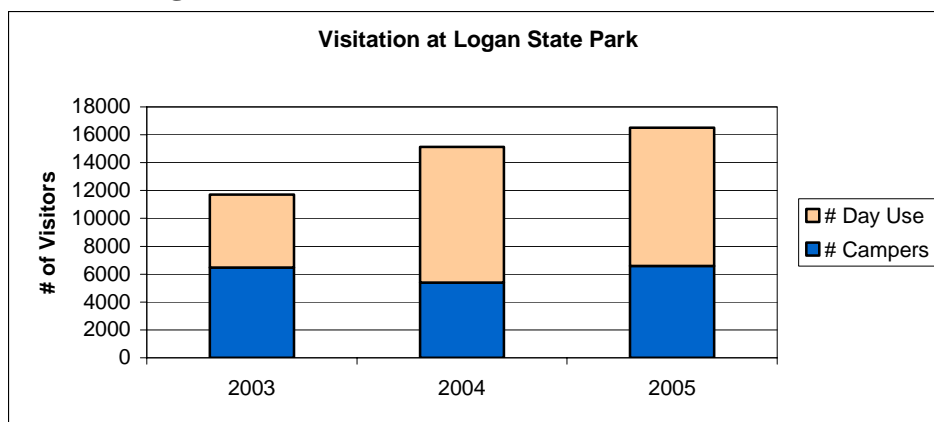
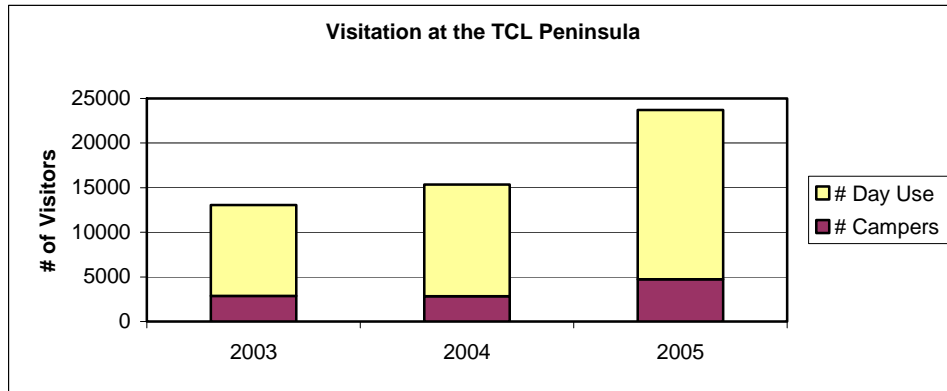


Table 3. TCL Lower Thompson Peninsula Visitation 2003-2005



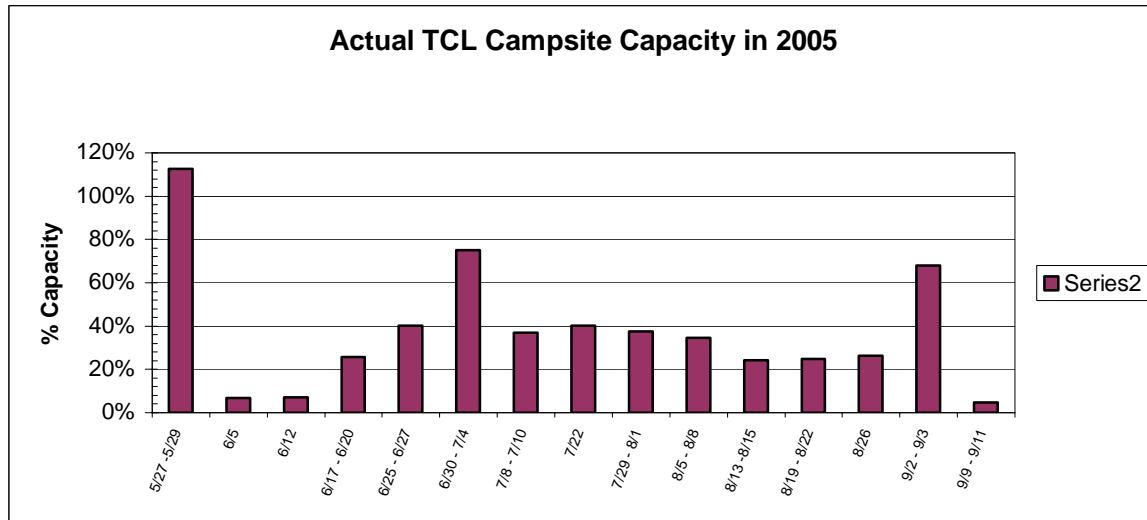
In 2003, a summer internship was conducted from June 5 through August 3. This internship provided a snapshot comparison of visitation between Loon Lake, Horseshoe Lake, Middle Thompson Lake, and McGregor Lake. When estimating visitation, random counts were completed at different sites around the TCL complex and then compared to the fixed traffic counter at the Lower Thompson Lake Peninsula. The result of the data revealed that collectively these sites received 48.28% of the visitation that the Lower Thompson Peninsula received. Therefore, if 1,000 traffic counts were reported at the Lower Thompson Peninsula, then it could be estimated that the total of the sites surveyed, in addition to the Lower Thompson Peninsula, would be 1,482 vehicles. This does not reflect all of the available camping sites at the TCL complex; therefore, extrapolation would be inaccurate. As a result of these variables, in addition to the lack of longevity of the survey, FWP is not confident that this data can be used to properly estimate overall visitation at the TCL complex.

The survey did reveal that 91% of the visitors to TCL are Montana residents. Lincoln County residents account for 39% of visitors to TCL, and Flathead County residents account for 36% of visitation. In the 2004 survey, it was reported that 53% of all campers brought at least one extra vehicle and 12% brought at least one OHV.

Revenue generated by camping fees can be used as an overall trend indicator of use at TCL. This is not, however, a reliable gauge of visitation due to the variations in the fee schedule, issues with fee compliance by visitors, and lack of accountability for day use and visitation by local landowners.

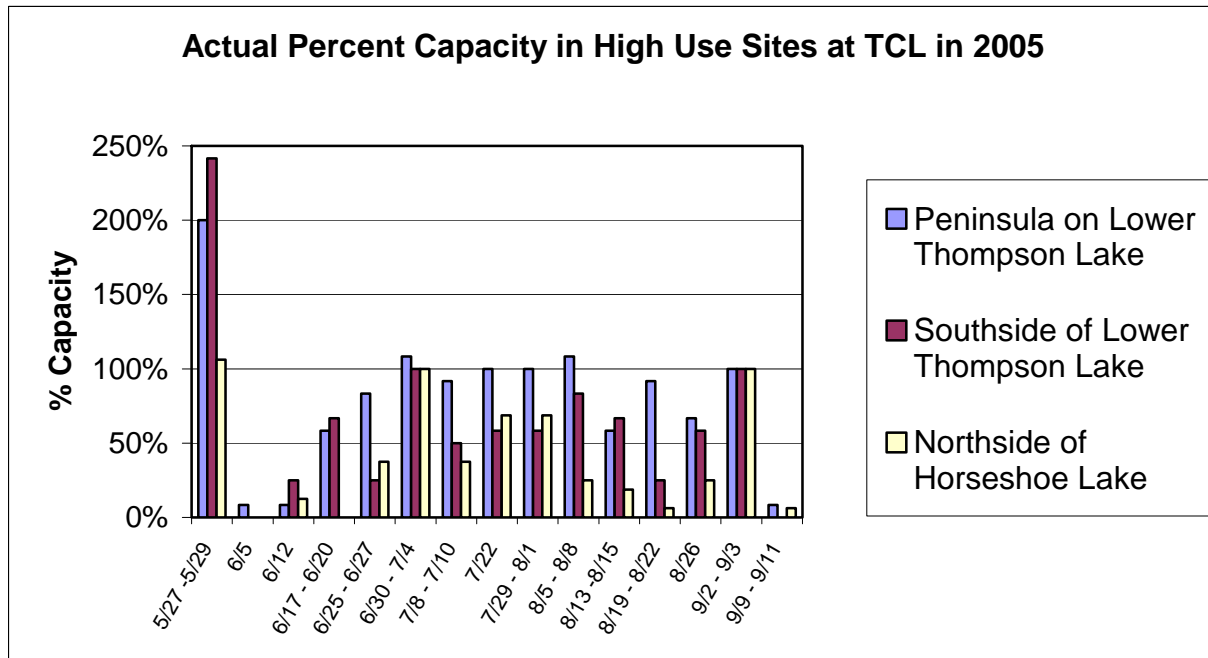
In 2005, the park ranger and seasonal staff initiated a process to gauge campsite occupancy rates during the summer season. This monitoring system offered valuable insight into site capacity and crowding issues during the peak camping season at TCL. In 2005, overall campsite occupancy was well below 100% (see Table 4), with the holiday weekends receiving the heaviest visitation. Comparing this data to the survey completed in 2004, the general trend of visitation throughout the summer season seems to be consistent. Table 4 documents campsite capacity for the entire TCL complex during the 2005 survey period.

Table 4. Actual Percentage of Campsite Capacity at TCL in 2005



Further analysis of site-specific surveys indicated that over-capacity is chronic in a few select sites throughout TCL, while other more dispersed sites often remain vacant. Table 5 documents site capacities at three of the most popular camping locations in TCL.

Table 5. High Use Capacity Rates



PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this management plan is to involve the public and stakeholders in the management process and to lay the foundation for future management actions. The TCL Management Plan Update is designed to build on the original 1993 TCL Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. This update is intended to offer detailed issues and management objectives for TCL over the next ten years. In five years this plan will be reviewed per FWP policy. It should be noted that other separate plans or environmental assessments might need to be developed according to federal or state policy to address specific management actions.

PLANNING PROCESS

In 2003, an oversight committee was created to advise and oversee the planning process for the Thompson Chain of Lakes management plan update. The committee was comprised of TCL users, Plum Creek Timber Company staff, U.S. Forest Service staff, neighboring property owners, and FWP staff (See Appendix A for a complete list of Oversight Committee members). In preparation of updating the TCL Management Plan, a series of meetings were held with the Oversight Committee, identifying the issues facing Thompson Chain of Lakes. In 2003, a questionnaire was developed and mailed to both landowners and visitors of TCL regarding issues and management options (see Appendix B for the questionnaire and compiled results).

Significant dates within the planning process are listed below:

- January 21, 2003 Initial Oversight Committee meeting discussing camping fee implementation at TCL and need for a management plan update.
- February 28, 2003 Discussion began with Oversight Committee regarding the planning process.
- April 3, 2003 Discussion of key issues at TCL with Oversight Committee.
- December 2003 TCL questionnaire is mass-mailed and made available at local stores in Kalispell and Libby.
- February 2004 Questionnaire is collected and compiled by FWP.
- March 5, 2004 Draft outline of management plan and issues was discussed with the Oversight Committee.
- July 17, 2004 Management plan update is discussed at Thompson Chain of Lakes Homeowners Association meeting.
- December 2004 Correspondence with Oversight Committee via e-mail regarding TCL issue-ranking.
- January 2005 Compilation of TCL issue-ranking responses by Oversight Committee.

- July 16, 2005 Discussion of progress of the TCL Management Plan Update at the Thompson Chain of Lakes Homeowners Association meeting.
- January 2006 First draft of TCL Management Plan Update is released for TCL Oversight Committee and internal FWP review and comment.
- March 2006 Plan is released for public review and comment.
- April 2006 Final draft is submitted to FWP director for approval.

THOMPSON CHAIN OF LAKES MANAGEMENT PLAN

During the planning process, the TCL Oversight Committee and FWP personnel identified the following issues that currently face TCL: Site Capacity, Site Protection, Roads, Noxious Weeds, Financial and Human Resources, Forest Health, Trails, and User-Constructed Facilities. The issues are listed in order of importance in consultation with the TCL Oversight Committee. Each issue contains a discussion section, goal statement, objective statements, and action items for each objective. Within each action item, the plans for implementation are identified along with a timeline within which the item should be completed. Following the issue section, there is also an implementation chart that outlines what needs to be completed each year according to the plan.

1. ISSUE: SITE CAPACITY

Issue Statement: TCL's current numbering system and capacity limits are confusing and complicated for both visitors and FWP personnel, thus making capacity compliance difficult. In addition, FWP has limited data regarding past and current use. Past surveys and tracking methods of occupancy throughout the TCL complex have been limited and only indicate overall use trends.

Discussion: Following the acquisition of TCL and the adoption of the 1993 Management Plan, each camping area at TCL was inventoried. The goal of this inventory was to create capacity limits for each site based on the current use patterns and the actual compacted area in the site. Each campsite had a specific capacity limit assigned that reflected the maximum number of camping units each particular site could hold. According to the 2005 FWP Biennial Fee Rule, *"a 'camper unit' is defined as any sleeping device, such as a tent, motorhome, camping bus, pull-type camper, or trailer, designed and commonly used for sleeping."*

The resulting campsite layout involved each general camping area having an alphanumeric label followed by a posted camper unit capacity. For example, a sign at McGregor Lake reads: *"Campsite A4. The capacity of this site is 4 camper units."* In theory, this system allows families and groups of people to camp together in one general camping area, thus catering to the traditional uses and desires of a segment of TCL visitors. Over the entire TCL complex there are a variety of campsite configurations, ranging from a site capacity of one camping unit to a maximum of 12 camping units. The entire TCL complex consists of 56 designated areas and a total capacity of 152 camper units. Camping fees are currently charged for each individual camping unit (camper, tent, RV, trailer).

In 2003 numbered posts were installed in several camp areas to encourage site capacity compliance. For example, in campsite C11, with a camper capacity of two units, two separate posts labeled #1 and #2 were placed at different locations within the general area. The goal was to assist visitors in understanding the capacity limits and to help delineate separate sites to prevent further site expansion. The majority of visitors, however, viewed this setup as separate campsites and oftentimes placed two or more camper units at each separate site within the general camping area.

Despite the good intentions of implementing the capacity system, it created confusion for visitors and FWP personnel. Since this approach is not used by other land management agencies or within Montana State Parks, it lacks the consistency needed to be successful. Other agencies, including Montana State Parks, have a system that requires payment for a campsite, not per camper unit, with each campsite having a uniform occupancy limit of two camping units. Over the past several years, visitors to the TCL complex have expressed confusion and displeasure with the current system.

According to the 2005 FWP Biennial Fee Rule, which governs fee setting for all Montana state parks and fishing access sites: “An overnight camping fee is charged per camper unit if sites are not designated.” It is further stated, “An overnight camping fee is charged per ‘campsite’ if sites are individually designated and numbered.” Furthermore, the fee rule states, “No more than one camper unit may occupy one campsite unless posted otherwise.” The 2005 Biennial Fee Rule further specifies that park managers can determine the fee required for group sites based on variables that occur at each site.

As outlined in the Biennial Fee Rule, the TCL complex could switch to a standard campsite system if separate sites are designated. Each numbered site would have a maximum capacity of two camper units, creating a simple and easy to understand system. In addition to individual campsites, group sites would be created with the purpose of offering large gathering areas for family reunions, etc. Group sites would have a maximum camper unit capacity based on the existing campsite size (see Appendix C for proposed site capacities). All camping units and vehicles would be required to remain within the site boundary as clearly delineated by barrier rock and/or boundary signage. Among the possible scenarios discussed, this arrangement seems to be the best option. However, if the goal is not met and overcapacity still seems to be an issue, then FWP may make changes to this plan to meet this goal.

The 2003 TCL visitor and landowner questionnaire revealed a desire for a reservable group campsite over a first-come, first-served group site. Due to the complexities and personnel required to implement a group site reservation system, FWP proposes instead to offer several self-serve group sites throughout the TCL complex. The survey also supports the designation of individual campsites, as opposed to general camping areas with posted capacities.

GOAL: Create a simpler, user-friendly campsite arrangement that protects the resource while simultaneously providing a variety of camping opportunities for visitors. Increase FWP’s knowledge of actual visitation and occupancy throughout the TCL complex.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Simplify the current capacity system by designating separate campsites.

Action Items:

- **Evaluate each camping area to transform current capacity limits of each area into separate campsites, allowing a maximum of two campers (or tents) per site.**

Implementation:

In order to assist the transformation from communal camping areas into individual campsites, FWP personnel evaluated each site based on the following criteria:

- Current use patterns
- Existing compacted ground
- Site delineation
- Current capacity limits
- Site sensitivity

The campsite capacity chart in Appendix D outlines the net gains or losses for each camp area in the TCL complex under the proposed numbering system.

Timeline for Completion: Completed.

2) **Create areas to be used for group camping sites.**

Action Items:

- **Identify sites appropriate for group camping areas.**

Implementation:

Sites have been evaluated and the proposed group sites are detailed in Appendix C. The criteria used to identify the proposed group campsites include:

- Providing a group opportunity on all major lakes.
- Seclusion from other sites for the purpose of noise control.
- Existing site size and capacity.
- Sensitivity of environment and area wildlife.
- Proximity to private landowners.

The purpose of creating group sites is to provide the opportunity for families or other large groups to camp at TCL, as has been a traditional use of the complex. The group sites will be on a first-come, first-served basis, with no reserving and/or saving sites. A maximum capacity is set for each of the group areas and will be posted on-site. The benefit to having group sites, beyond the opportunity for visitors, is that the disturbed area is concentrated and should help to limit site expansion.

Timeline for Completion: Completed.

- **Create a campsite boundary in designated group campsites.**

Implementation:

The purpose of creating a boundary in group sites is to prevent site expansion and to conserve the surrounding vegetation. Barrier rock is the preferred site delineation material; therefore proposed group sites have been placed as a very high priority on completing barrier rockwork. Campsite boundary signs will be used as a temporary visual boundary, until permanent boundary delineation is possible.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years of plan approval.

3) Implement a simpler numbering system to designate individual campsites and group campsites.

Action Items:

- **Renumber individual and group sites as 1 through 83 and G1 through G8, respectively.**

Implementation:

Upon evaluation of site capacity, FWP personnel completed a re-numbering proposal (Appendices E and F). The new numbering proposal replaces the alphanumeric combination with a numeric system to cover the entire TCL complex. Group campsites are identified with a 'G' prefix followed by the group site number, i.e., G1.

Timeline for Completion: Completed.

- **Replace current capacity signage with new campsite numbers and signage.**

Implementation:

Replace alphanumeric numbering with individual site numbering (Appendix F). Install signage on existing 4" x 4" wooden posts for group sites, indicating the fee schedule and regulations (Appendix H).

Timeline for Completion: Within one year of plan approval, preferably before Memorial Day weekend 2006.

4) Revise signage at self-pay stations to reflect changes in fee schedule, campsite designation, and group camping areas.

- **Determine fees for group campsites from the following two alternatives:**

Alternative 1: Pay the allotted fee (\$7 or \$12) for every two campers (or tents) in the group campsite.

Alternative 2: Pay a flat rate of \$40 for the site regardless of the number of campers (or tents) up to the maximum posted capacity.

Implementation:

Utilize the FWP Parks Division, the TCL Oversight Committee, and public scoping to assist in making a decision as to the preferred alternative in regard to the above fee options for group sites. Once a decision is made, signage can be adjusted to reflect the change.

Timeline for Completion: In conjunction with plan approval.

- **Update fee schedule signage for individual and group campsites.**

Implementation:

Revise and install a new fee schedule decal for the self-pay stations (Appendix I). Two different signage options have been developed based on the two alternatives proposed for the group site fee schedule. In addition, a new regulations decal (Appendix J) will need to be added to the fee schedule board.

Timeline for Completion: Within one year of plan approval, coinciding with the implementation and completion of new signage.

- **Revise the TCL brochure and maps.**

Implementation:

Update the TCL maps to reflect the new campsite numbers and group sites. Update the brochure wording to reflect the new fee schedule, campsite capacity, and regulations.

Timeline for Completion: Within one year of plan approval, coinciding with the implementation and completion of new signage.

5) Develop and implement reliable methodology of tracking occupancy and visitation at TCL.

- **Install traffic counters at major access points throughout the TCL complex.**

Implementation:

In addition to the existing traffic counter at the Lower Thompson Peninsula, install traffic counters at the following locations:

- Loon Lake main access to campsite O1

- Horseshoe Lake main access
- Upper Thompson Lake main access
- ACM Road on Lower and Middle Thompson Lakes
- McGregor Lake east end main access
- Little McGregor main access

Timeline for Completion: Within ten years of plan approval.

▪ **Develop visitation formulas to extrapolate TCL recreation visitation.**

Implementation:

Using the data from the traffic counters, develop formulas to reliably estimate actual use at TCL, taking into account day use, administrative use, landowner use, and other possible uses.

Timeline for Completion: Within ten years of plan approval.

▪ **Refine and continue the tracking of campsite occupancy by seasonal staff.**

Implementation:

Build on the 2005 data collection by seasonal staff by improving on overall data collection as well as more accurate counts of OHVs and extra vehicles.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

2. ISSUE: SITE PROTECTION

Issue Statement: TCL's campsites and day use sites suffer from severe resource impacts due to heavy use, a lack of site delineation, and traffic control methods.

Discussion: Since adoption of the original TCL Management Plan in 1993, several campsites and day use sites have experienced an increase in resource impacts. These impacts have been the direct result of over capacity and pioneering (expansion) within the sites. This has caused an increase in bare ground, resulting in wind and water erosion, rutting, exposed tree roots, and invasion of noxious weeds.

A primary goal of the 1993 TCL Management Plan was to "protect the resource" while providing opportunities for "traditional dispersed recreational use." Public sentiment reflected a desire toward leaving site conditions as "they currently exist." Therefore, in order to manage the sites in their current state and to prevent further impacts, FWP completed a site evaluation to measure ground compaction and site size to provide baseline data. In recent summers, spot evaluations have been conducted, and ground compaction and campsite size have been gradually increasing.

Over the past ten years, some resource protection and rehabilitation measures have occurred in the form of road and day use parking development and placement of barrier rock and signage. However, most of this site protection occurred in association with major capital improvement projects at boat launches in five sites. Since that time, no substantial site protection measures have occurred in the remaining 51 campsites or various day use sites. Campsite boundary and revegetation signs were placed in various sites to help prevent pioneering and site expansion. The signing was only intended as a short-term solution until FWP can secure adequate funding to implement long-term protection measures.



Maintenance crew placing barrier rock at TCL

Throughout the TCL complex very few of the property boundaries and corners have been marked. As surrounding private lands are being developed, it is becoming important that boundary lines are delineated and maintained.

GOAL: Provide for long-term use of the campsites and day use sites while maintaining their natural quality and character.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Implement traffic control measures to delineate site boundaries.

Action Items:

- **Place barrier rocks within campsites and day use sites to delineate the site boundary.**

Implementation:

Barrier rocks need to be placed in order of priority as outlined in Appendix K. Priority levels were determined and assigned based on the following criteria:

- Past occupancy levels
- Site sensitivity
- Proposed group sites
- Likelihood of continued site expansion

Timeline for completion:

Very high priority level: within two years of plan approval.

High priority level: within three years of plan approval.

Medium priority level: within five years of plan approval.

Low priority level: within ten years of plan approval.

- **Continue use of campsite boundary and revegetation signs where needed in lower priority areas.**

Implementation:

Maintain current signage placement and add signage in areas where resource damage is occurring in lieu of barrier rocks.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

2) Prioritize and implement site maintenance techniques and restoration projects.

Action Items:

- **Remove trees and stumps that create a safety hazard and inhibit visitors from easy access and parking in campsites and day use sites.**

Implementation:

Examine each site for hazardous trees and those that inhibit easy access into and within campsites. Prioritize the removal of trees and stumps in each site based on the following criteria:

- Safety hazards
- Popularity and past use levels of the site
- Obstructed access to the site
- Lack of sufficient area to maneuver in the site

Sites should be continually monitored and examined for hazardous trees, with removal projects scheduled annually. Those trees and stumps identified for removal based on the other criteria should be addressed simultaneously with the implementation of barrier work.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

- **Perform site leveling in campsites to provide more suitable areas for RVs, trailers, and tents.**

Implementation:

In conjunction with performing site delineation work, sites that are extremely rutted and have poor drainage will be graded and graveled if financial resources are available.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing, with the execution of site delineation work.

- **Implement restoration methods in sites with excessive resource impacts.**

Implementation:

Examine sites for impacted areas needing reclamation and restoration. Once delineation work is completed, identified areas outside the site boundary should be softened and replanted with native grasses, forbs, and saplings as needed.

Timeline for Completion: Within five years of plan approval or when individual site delineation work is completed.

3) **Initiate a systematic process of surveying TCL boundaries with priorities on those that border private parcels.**

Action Items:

- **Prioritize survey needs and write personal service contracts for completion of property boundary survey work.**

Implementation:

Identify boundary lines bordering private land and prioritize the survey work to be completed. Write a personal service contract specifying priority surveying locations.

Timeline of Completion: Within five years.

3. ISSUE: ROADS

Issue Statement: Several main and secondary access roads throughout the TCL complex are in very poor condition and are exhibiting signs of rutting, erosion, and braiding. In addition, several two-track spur roads have been pioneered since FWP acquisition.

Discussion: The majority of roads throughout TCL were not designed or constructed to recognize safety or resource protection needs. They were located and constructed several years ago by Champion and other timber companies for the sole purpose of timber removal and were intended for limited, short-time use. Once built, they provided the public with easy and unrestricted access to the lakes for camping, fishing, and picnicking. Additionally, road pioneering continues in the TCL complex as unauthorized off-road travel occurs.

In the original 1993 Management Plan, the public did not desire road improvements, as it was feared that this would increase use. However, this view has changed with many visitors, particularly since the implementation of camping fees. Frequently, the public has expressed through contact with FWP personnel and through the use of comment cards, that the roads need to be improved. Public opinion does vary on the degree to which the roads should be improved. Some still fear that more developed roads will increase use, while others feel it is necessary to improve the roads for site accessibility.

In 1993 five sites were identified as needing improvements. FWP has completed road improvement projects in conjunction with those identified projects, which include boat ramp installation at the following sites:

- 1) The Peninsula, between Lower and Middle Thompson Lakes.
- 2) Near the channel between the middle and upper lobes of Upper Thompson Lake.
- 3) Adjacent to the main camp on Horseshoe Lake.
- 4) The main camp on the west end of Loon Lake.
- 5) The access road and camp at Little McGregor Lake.

There are currently three sections of road throughout the TCL complex that have been identified as having issues regarding legal access and maintenance responsibility. Two of the sections of road are on the ACM Road on Middle Thompson Lake and the third is located near the fee station before the bridge between the upper and middle lobes of Upper Thompson Lake. FWP, Plum Creek Timber Company, DNRC, and the private landowners are currently working together to develop a shared maintenance and reciprocal agreement. FWP currently cost-shares with Lincoln County and Plum Creek Timber Company to perform road maintenance and dust abatement on the ACM road, which parallels the south side of the Lower and Middle Thompson Lakes.

The majority of the road system throughout TCL has not been maintained for several years and is exhibiting signs of severe rutting, erosion, potholing, and braiding. During the drier summer months of July and August, dust abatement also becomes an issue, as noted above.

Several short, dead-end spur roads exist or have been pioneered throughout TCL, and most do not readily provide the public with recreational access to the lakes, campsites, or day use sites. In other cases, pioneered roads provide unnecessary multiple access roads to sites. A determination needs to be made as to their purpose and need.

FWP may need to implement seasonal road closures during spring melt to prevent further road damage and provide for public safety.

GOAL: Ensure for the long-term public and administration use of the TCL road system.

OBJECTIVES:

1) Improve primary and secondary recreational access roads.

Discussion:

In keeping with the primitive nature of a fishing access site, and as outlined in the 2020 Vision for Montana State Parks, roads will only be developed to the minimum level necessary for access to the sites. This includes, but is not limited to, developing proper road drainage, a solid road base, and pullouts for passing.

Action Items:

- **Perform road improvement projects as funding allows.**

Implementation:

All main access roads at TCL have been inventoried and prioritized (Appendix L) based on the following criteria:

- Safety Hazards
- Visitor complaints
- Dust issues and road surface
- Erosion, runoff, and water quality
- Access problems

The priority levels have been assigned on a high, medium, and low scale. As funds allow, those roads labeled as high priority should be fixed first.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing, as funding allows.

- **Explore more cost effective methods of completing roadwork at TCL.**

Implementation:

Contact and discuss roadwork training projects with a variety of different groups. This may include, but is not limited to, Flathead Valley Community College or the Army National Guard. The purpose of these contacts is to determine if projects can be more cost effective for FWP while providing training opportunities for these different groups.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years of plan approval.

2) Create and implement a road maintenance plan to ensure access to recreational sites.

Action Items:

- **Identify necessary regular and reoccurring maintenance procedures needed to maintain primary access roads in order to prevent further deterioration.**

Implementation:

Recruit the assistance of Design and Construction staff to assess the necessary measures required for proper maintenance of each section of road. The suggested work should be identified and recorded for future reference, i.e., the ACM road requires grading and dust abatement annually.

Timeline for Completion: Within three years.

- **Identify the proper timing and intervals of regular maintenance for primary access roads.**

Implementation:

For each main access road or secondary spur road, plan the ideal time of year that regular road maintenance project should be completed. Timing should be based on past visitor use trends, typical weather patterns (i.e., rainy seasons) and long-term effectiveness of the maintenance being performed.

Timeline for Completion: Within three years.

- **Develop consistent criteria for seasonal road closures.**

Implementation:

Develop criteria and procedure for notifying the public for temporary seasonal road closures based on potential for road damage, i.e., excessive precipitation.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years.

3) Inventory and map all secondary roads in TCL with the purpose of identifying recently pioneered routes and to prevent further pioneering.

Action Items:

- **Add secondary routes to existing GIS road layer.**

Implementation:

Utilize GPS units to plot secondary routes throughout the TCL complex.

Timeline for Completion: Within three years.

- **Obliterate recent and future pioneered routes.**

Implementation:

Identify and obliterate routes that were pioneered since FWP started managing the site in 1993.

Timeline for Completion: Within three years.

4) Secure legal access to all roads in the TCL complex.

Action Items:

- **Complete process initiated in 2004 of ensuring public and administrative access to all properties within the TCL complex and completion of reciprocal maintenance agreements between FWP, DNRC, Plum Creek Timber Company, and residential property owners.**

Implementation:

Complete research initiated in 2004 on legal access rights on roads throughout the TCL complex. Identify and secure access to those FWP and the public do not have a current legal easement to.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years.

4. ISSUE: NOXIOUS WEEDS

Issue Statement: TCL suffers from a severe infestation of noxious weeds, with spotted knapweed the most prevalent. TCL is being managed under the Region One weed management program; however, past control measures have been limited by funding. FWP spends approximately \$4,000 per year in weed management at fishing access sites regionwide. In addition to terrestrial weeds, aquatic weed monitoring needs to continue.

Discussion: Noxious weeds have become well established throughout TCL. Spotted knapweed is the most prominent noxious weed found, with the heaviest infestations found along roadways and within and surrounding campsites and day use sites. It is also present in smaller densities of remote, undeveloped areas.

To date, limited chemical and biological control methods have been used to combat noxious weeds at TCL. Some mechanical control such as hand pulling and cultivation by FWP personnel has been done in recent years, but has been sporadic.

TCL has never been mapped to determine precisely how many different species exist or the extent of infestation. An integrated weed inventory and management plan is needed to prioritize, implement, and evaluate weed treatment at TCL.

A primary aquatic nuisance plant species of concern for the TCL complex is Eurasian water-milfoil (EWM). Currently, aquatic weeds have not yet been discovered at TCL, but populations do exist relatively near in Idaho in the Clark Fork River and Hayden Lake. Also of concern is the exotic New Zealand mudsnail, a crustacean that has been found in many rivers in Montana. The closest source to Region One is in the Missouri River at Wolf Creek. Zebra mussels are also a serious concern west of the Mississippi River; however, none are known to exist in Montana yet. Since both noxious aquatic weeds and aquatic species can be transferred via boat, these issues need to be addressed before they appear on-site.

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| GOAL: Reduce and control the spread of noxious weeds. |
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OBJECTIVES:

1) Significantly increase the integrated weed control throughout the TCL complex.

Action Items:

- **Maintain a minimal expenditure of \$4,000 annually, with increased spending to account for inflation, on direct weed control measures.**

Implementation:

Annually utilize funding for direct weed control measures, specifically spraying noxious weeds.

Timeline for Completion: Immediately, upon plan approval.

- **Purchase weed-spraying equipment, in order to produce more effective measures of weed control.**

Implementation:

With the guidance and assistance of the Parks Maintenance Department, purchase suitable weed-spraying equipment to be used regionwide.

Timeline for Completion: Within three years.

2) Inventory and map noxious weeds throughout TCL.

Action Items:

- **Inventory the species and location of noxious weeds.**

Implementation:

Seek funding to contract for noxious weed survey and mapping for the TCL complex.

Timeline for Completion: Within five years.

3) Develop a comprehensive, integrated weed management program.

Action Items:

- **Determine the most effective treatment methods for different species of noxious weeds.**

Implementation:

Prioritize and schedule weed mitigation actions throughout the TCL complex based on the following criteria:

- Noxious weed species
- Potential to spread
- Potential for habitat destruction.

Timeline for Completion: Within five years.

4) Inform and educate the public at TCL about noxious weed control.

Action Items:

- **Post general informational brochures concerning noxious weed control on information boards and within brochure boxes throughout TCL.**

Implementation:

Identify appropriate noxious weed brochures and have them available in the brochure boxes at the fee stations throughout TCL. Place laminated general information sheets on the information boards at the fee stations. It is important to select brochures that explain the necessity for noxious weed control along with how visitors can help to reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years.

5. ISSUE: FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Issue Statement: Funding and staffing levels for TCL are inadequate to perform a sufficient level of site and facility maintenance.

Discussion: TCL is the largest FAS in the state. Encompassing nearly 3,000 acres, TCL currently provides 56 campsites (including space for 152 camper units) and approximately 20 day use sites on 14 lakes spanning 20 miles between Kalispell and Libby. Facilities include 6 concrete boat launches, 16 vault toilets, 16 self-pay stations, and 2 host pads that provide electricity, phone, water, and sewer.

Unlike other large recreation areas similar to TCL in size and complexity, such as the Blackfoot River Recreation Corridor, Smith River, and Alberton Gorge, TCL does not operate with a budget of its own or have a full-time manager. Funding for TCL is part of the Region One FAS budget, which includes 22 other fishing access sites throughout Region One. The total operations and maintenance budget for Region One FAS in fiscal year 2006 is \$84,778. This budget is not earmarked by site, and TCL received a fluctuating percentage of this budget.

Revenue derived from camping fees was \$21,733 in 2004 and \$22,576 in 2005. That funding, along with camping revenues from other fishing access sites statewide, is deposited into the state of Montana's Fishing Access Site Earned Revenue Account and is utilized to fund FAS operations statewide.

Currently, TCL has one park ranger, with approximately 1,040 hours per year allocated to the TCL complex and Logan State Park. This individual is primarily responsible for assistance with routine operations at TCL, with secondary emphasis on assisting with other fishing access sites throughout the region. These duties include but are not limited to: customer service, supervision of a seasonal laborer and volunteers, collection and remittance of camping fees, sign maintenance, vandalism repair, traffic counts, litter patrol, noxious weed control, revegetation and rehabilitation projects, monitoring and implementation of management plans, and enforcement of rules and regulations. From May to September 2005, this individual spent approximately 660 hours at TCL performing the above duties.

In 2004, a new warden position was created whose district encompasses the TCL complex and surrounding areas. This warden is primarily responsible for enforcement duties regarding the FAS, but also attends management meetings to offer operational suggestions and input. Due to the size, complexity, and related expenses of TCL, additional funding and staffing resources are needed to enable FWP to manage TCL adequately.

GOAL: Support TCL with adequate funding and staffing for operations and maintenance, resource protection, and visitor safety.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) **Create a separate and distinct TCL budget outside of the standard FAS budget, so that operation costs and budget requests can be more accurately studied.**

Action Items:

- **Design a budget tracking system to more effectively identify operation costs at TCL.**

Implementation:

Design a system that tracks and categorizes all expenditures for TCL by any and all personnel that have access to the budget.

Timeline for Completion: Within one year.

- **Develop a separate and distinct budget proposal for TCL based on Action Item 1.**

Implementation:

Based on the expenditure records as outlined in Action Item 1, develop and submit a reasonable proposal for creating a separate and distinct TCL budget.

Timeline for Completion: Within five years.

- **Explore and pursue retaining earned revenue accounts based on TCL user fees.**

Implementation:

Identify and address the necessary steps in retaining earned revenue for direct use at TCL, as requested by the TCL Oversight Committee.

Timeline for Completion: Within five years.

2) **Increase allocated FTE to current positions at TCL, and study the feasibility of creating a TCL manager position.**

Action Items:

- **Explore the creation of a joint Thompson River Recreation Corridor/TCL FAS site interdivisional manager position.**

Implementation:

Discuss and explore the feasibility of creating an interdivisional manager position with the Wildlife and Fisheries Departments.

Timeline for Completion: Within ten years.

- **Upgrade the park ranger position from .5 FTE to .75 FTE, under the condition that this additional FTE may be used in the creation of a manager position at a later time.**

Implementation:

Following appropriate procedures, allocate an additional .25 FTE to the current park ranger position.

Timeline for Completion: Within five years.

- **Increase the FAS maintenance position(s) from .15 FTE to .30 FTE.**

Implementation:

Following appropriate procedures, allocate an additional .15 FTE to the FAS maintenance position dedicated to TCL.

Timeline for Completion: Within five years.

6. ISSUE: FOREST HEALTH

Issue Statement: The TCL complex contains a mix of forest stands ranging from old growth ponderosa pine and western larch found predominantly around lakeshore, to cutting units dominated by moderately sized trees and heavy Douglas fir regeneration.

Discussion: Prior to FWP ownership, timber harvest was prevalent within the TCL complex. In 2002, contract forester Fred D. Hodgeboom conducted a brief assessment of forest conditions at TCL. From his assessment, Hodgeboom noted that since logging activities have ceased, Douglas fir is becoming the predominant species in several areas. Consequently, TCL is gradually losing age and species diversity. Hodgeboom indicates that as Douglas fir continues to increase in density, it provides the crown continuity to carry a crown fire that would destroy centuries-old Ponderosa pine and other species. In addition, Douglas fir is also subject to severe insect and disease infestations, including bark beetle and dwarf mistletoe. By managing the density and crown continuity of fir through harvesting, FWP may achieve a diversity of age classes and species composition, as well as a reduced fire hazard.

However, the important thermal cover Douglas fir provides for wildlife needs to be considered when managing for forest health. As surrounding lands have been harvested, important thermal



Lakeshore forest at TCL

cover has been greatly reduced, if not entirely eliminated. Thermal cover, provided by mature Douglas fir, is essential for winter range habitat for white-tailed deer. Fire risk is also minimal with mature Douglas fir stands, as opposed to small ladder fuels created by intense regeneration. Therefore, site-specific forestry will require consideration of wildlife needs, fire risk, and hazards before management actions are taken.

In recent years, FWP personnel have removed various dead, diseased, and/or leaning trees in high use areas where they posed a threat to human life or FWP facilities. However, this has been done on a limited basis. A proactive and systematic approach needs to be applied to identify, plan for, and remove hazardous trees in high use areas.

A fuels reduction project is currently scheduled for completion in winter/spring 2006. This project, done with the assistance and supervision of DNRC, is for the purpose of reducing fuel loading in areas of TCL adjacent to private homes.

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| <p>GOAL: Manage TCL's forests to promote stand health, species diversity, and wildlife habitat, and to enhance public safety from hazardous trees and wildfire.</p> |
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OBJECTIVES:

1) **Where applicable, implement recommendations from the *Hazard Tree and Forest Health Environmental Assessment*.**

Action Items:

- **Implement criteria and guidelines for individual trees in and adjacent to developed, high use areas.**

Implementation:

Evaluate trees in high use areas with the purpose of identifying hazardous trees. Hazardous trees should be examined and removed as soon as feasible to prevent possible injuries.

Timeline for Completion: Yearly and ongoing.

2) **Manage TCL's forests for forest health, quality and diversity of fish and wildlife habitats, and fuels mitigation according to recognized defensible space criteria.**

Action Items:

- **Monitor and prioritize forest management projects for the purpose of reducing fire risk to adjacent landowners and for providing wildlife habitat.**

Implementation:

Continually monitor forest health, identifying areas of concern based on the following criteria:

- Fire risk to adjacent landowners.
- Overall forest vitality.
- Diversity of wildlife habitat, including but not limited to white-tailed deer thermal cover, snag recruitment, and mature forest stands.
- Shoreline and stream protection for fish habitat.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

- **Coordinate with DNRC and the Wildlife Division of FWP to manage the forest at TCL to promote forest diversity and maximize wildlife habitat.**

Implementation:

Continue contact with DNRC, private foresters, Wildlife Division personnel, and the interested public regarding the overall management of

TCL's forest. In areas that provide important white-tailed deer winter range, forest management should favor wildlife habitat.

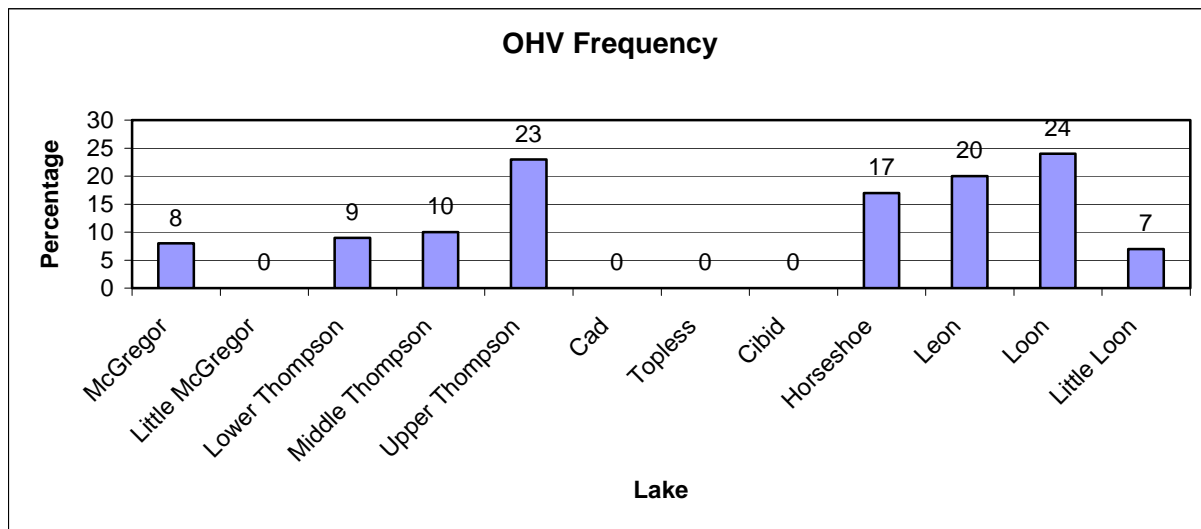
Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

7. ISSUE: TRAILS

Issue Statement: Several user-created single-track and two-track trails have appeared since the 1993 management plan was written. The public created these trails for the purpose of motorized recreation. In 2001, these trails were signed as closed to motorized use, while still allowing for nonmotorized recreation. This closure was consistent with FWP's policy of limiting all motorized use to authorized roads on all FWP-owned lands. Since the closure, FWP has received requests to develop a trail system for motorized use in addition to the existing non-motorized opportunities.

Discussion: Throughout the high use summer months, the presence of OHVs (4-wheelers and motorcycles) is commonplace at TCL. On any given weekend, it's common to see anywhere from 1 to 4 OHVs parked in campsites, with many others being operated on the established road system. The majority of OHV use can be attributed to overnight campers; however, some of the use also originates from local homeowners. In July and August of 2004 a survey was conducted that included the presence of OHVs at campsites throughout the TCL complex (see Table 6).

Table 6. Frequency of OHVs at TCL in 2004



According to the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM), OHV use on all FWP-owned lands (FASs, state parks, and wildlife management areas) is limited to authorized roadways open for motorized use. Furthermore, as written in ARM, OHVs are required to be street legal and licensed if they are operated on any road open to the public. This includes, but is not limited to, having a license plate and licensed driver. This policy is consistent with other state and federal land management agencies such as DNRC, BLM, and USFS. The intent is to minimize user conflicts and protect fragile soils, riparian areas, vegetation, and wildlife.

Since adoption of the 1993 TCL Management Plan, several motorized trails have appeared (single and two-track) throughout TCL. Most were created by illegal “cross-country” travel, while others were simply existing game trails and old log-skidding trails that OHV riders were beginning to use. In 2001, FWP personnel began a process of signing unauthorized trails as closed. Closures were intended to restore native vegetation on roads and to prevent soil erosion and invasion of noxious weeds. In 2004, this original signing was updated to reflect a style and format that was more consistent with other TCL signing as well as restriction signing of other land management agencies.

Once the signing was completed, FWP personnel began to receive questions and comments from the camping public and locals in the area concerning the closures. The comments were a mixture of negative and positive. Some of the public were unhappy because the closure was perceived as “just another restriction.” Others were pleased, citing a “reduction in noise and dust” in the campsites and adjacent to their property.

During a planning meeting in early 2004, some Oversight Committee members voiced their concern that FWP was unfairly restricting OHV use. While discussing the idea of developing a nonmotorized (hiking, biking, horseback) trail system, some committee members felt that there were also a demand and recognized need to provide opportunities for motorized use at TCL.

Considering the comments FWP has received both for and against providing motorized recreation, it has become obvious this issue is deserving of further attention. FWP needs to reexamine the possibility of providing opportunities for motorized recreation in addition to non-motorized trail opportunities.

While considering the development of an OHV trail system, it is important to recognize that all roads open to the public are usable to legally licensed OHVs. Furthermore, it is not FWP’s intent to reduce or close any designated roads currently open to OHV use, unless otherwise stated in the *Roads Issue*.

GOAL: Determine the compatibility, need, and public opinion of providing opportunities for an OHV trail system that would add new trails to the TCL complex.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) **Determine if an OHV trail system is considered as an acceptable and compatible recreational use within the TCL complex.**

Action Items:

- **Consult with a variety of FWP staff reviewing the legal, social, managerial, and natural resource factors that need to be considered to make an informed decision.**

Implementation:

Gather information and professional opinions regarding the development of an OHV trail system that would add new trails throughout the TCL complex. Explore all options and variations possible, including full-scale to more limited trail systems. Determine if any of the variations are a feasible and desired recreational use at TCL.

Timeline for Completion: Within five years of plan approval.

**If an OHV trail system is deemed to be a use that warrants further consideration, FWP will proceed to Objective 2.*

2) Gather public opinion on creating an OHV trail system.

Action Items:

- **Develop and distribute a public survey to determine support or opposition to a formalized OHV trail system.**

**If the survey reflects public support for an OHV trail system, FWP will continue to Objectives 3, 4 & 5.*

3) Determine the type, location, and extent of an OHV trail system to provide, while also recognizing the need for developing formal, nonmotorized trail opportunities.

Action Items:

- **Determine the type and extent of OHV trail system to develop.**
- **Identify and map a trail system, both motorized and nonmotorized.**

4) Secure funding to develop, maintain, and monitor a motorized and non-motorized trail system.

Action Items:

- **Apply for trail grant money and seek any additional funding sources.**

5) Explore possibilities of creating a larger, interlinking, motorized and non-motorized trail system with adjacent land management agencies in the TCL area.

Action Items:

- **Develop partnerships with Plum Creek Timber Company, U.S. Forest Service, and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation in development of a cooperative, interlinking trail system.**

8. ISSUE: USER-CONSTRUCTED FACILITIES

Issue Statement: Several user-constructed facilities currently exist throughout TCL. Many of these facilities were constructed and placed prior to FWP ownership and include such things as rope swings, plywood picnic tables, pallet and plywood docks, outhouses, primitive shelters, etc. Many of these structures are dilapidated, unsafe, and may pose a threat to public safety and ultimately to FWP legally.

Discussion: Public use of the Thompson Chain of Lakes area for fishing, camping, and picnicking dates back several decades. Champion International and other previous owners allowed virtually unlimited access with very few restrictions on recreational use. Hence, during the years prior to FWP acquisition, several user-built facilities accumulated on the property. Most of the structures were intended for user comfort, such as outhouses, pallet and plywood docks, shelters, and picnic tables. Others, like rope swings, were placed solely for recreational purposes.



Rope Swing on Lower Thompson Lake

In recent years, FWP has removed several primitive outhouses and pit toilets. They were very old, dilapidated, and unsightly, and the public had long since ceased using them. However, several facilities and structures still remain, with the public continuing to use them. By condoning their existence and use without proper safety inspections, FWP may be jeopardizing the public's safety and welfare and increasing the potential for future litigation. FWP needs to document, inspect, and make decisions on continued use or removal of unauthorized facilities on the property.

GOAL: Increase public safety while reducing FWP liability in relation to construction and/or placement of unauthorized structures at TCL.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) **Inventory and prioritize the removal of user-built structures based on safety hazards.**

Action Items:

- **Document the existence of user-built structures throughout the TCL complex.**

Implementation:

Document all user-built structures, including photographs, specific locations, and possible hazards related to the structure. Evaluate each user-built structure to determine whether it poses a safety threat, and document the justification for the decision on whether or not to remove each structure. The justification criteria that will be used in determining the removal of a user-constructed facility are the following:

- Safety hazard
- FWP liability in case of an injury
- Sanitary issues
- Likelihood of human injury
- Occurring resource damage

Timeline for Completion: Within one year.

2) **Systematically remove or replace the user-built structures that are deemed as unsafe for public use and pose a threat of liability to FWP.**

Action Items:

- **Remove or replace existing user-built structures that cause a safety hazard.**

Implementation:

Prioritize and implement the removal of all structures deemed a safety hazard. Upon removal of unsafe facilities, approved alternative facilities should be examined and installed if feasible. Attempts should be made to revegetate the sites and if necessary temporarily close them to public use until the site regenerates.

Timeline for Completion: Within two years.

- **Dismantle and remove any newly placed, unapproved, user-constructed structures as soon as they are discovered.**

Implementation:

Continually monitor for newly constructed user-built structures, and dismantle them as soon as possible in order to discourage future construction of such structures.

Timeline for Completion: Ongoing.

IMPLEMENTATION

The following timeline has been identified relating to each issue discussed in the previous section. Although each action has a completion time listed, the exact date of completion may vary due to funding or uncontrollable circumstances, as this plan is meant to act as a guide for park managers. The baseline of this timeline is the approval of this plan.

| COMPLETED | |
|---------------|--|
| Issue | Action |
| Site Capacity | Evaluate each camping area to transform current capacity limits of each area into separate campsites, allowing a maximum of two campers (or tents) per site. |
| | Identify sites appropriate for group camping areas. |
| | Renumber individual and group sites as 1 through 83 and G1 through G8, respectively. |

| ONGOING | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Issue | Action |
| Site Capacity | Refine and continue the tracking of campsite occupancy by seasonal staff. |
| Site Protection | Continue use of campsite boundary and revegetation signs where needed in lower priority areas. |
| | Remove trees and stumps that create a safety hazard and inhibit visitors from easy access and parking in campsites and day use sites. |
| | Perform site leveling, in conjunction with the execution of barrier rock placement, in campsites to provide more suitable areas for RVs, trailers, and tents. |
| Roads | Perform road improvement projects as funding allows. |
| Forest Health | Implement criteria and guidelines for individual trees in and adjacent to developed, high use areas. |
| | Coordinate with DNRC and the wildlife division of FWP to manage the forest at TCL to promote forest diversity and maximize wildlife habitat. |
| | Monitor and prioritize forest management projects for the purpose of reducing fire risk to adjacent landowners and for providing wildlife habitat. |
| User-Constructed Facilities | Dismantle and remove any newly placed, unapproved, user-constructed structures as soon as they are discovered. |

| WITHIN ONE YEAR | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Issue | Action |
| Site Capacity | Replace current capacity signage with new campsite numbers and signage. |
| | Determine the fees for group campsites from the two alternatives. |
| | Update fee schedule signage for individual and group campsites. |
| | Revise the TCL brochure and maps. |
| Noxious Weeds | Maintain a minimal expenditure of \$4,000 annually, with increased spending to account for inflation, on direct weed control measures. |
| Financial and Human Resources | Design a budget tracking system to more effectively identify operation costs at TCL. |
| User-Constructed Facilities | Document the existence of user-built structures throughout the TCL complex. |

| WITHIN TWO YEARS | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Issue | Action |
| Site Capacity | Create a campsite boundary in designated group campsites. |
| Site Protection | Place barrier rocks within campsites and day use sites to delineate the site boundary in sites labeled as a very high priority level. |
| Roads | Explore more cost effective methods of completing roadwork at TCL. |
| | Develop consistent criteria for seasonal road closures. |
| | Complete process initiated in 2004 of insuring public and administrative access to all properties within the TCL complex and completion of reciprocal maintenance agreements between FWP, DNRC, Plum Creek Timber Company, and residential property owners. |
| Noxious Weeds | Post general informational brochures concerning noxious weed control on information boards and within brochure boxes throughout TCL. |
| User-Constructed Facilities | Remove or replace existing user-constructed structures that cause a safety hazard. |

| WITHIN THREE YEARS | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Issue | Action |
| Site Protection | Place barrier rocks within campsites and day use sites to delineate the site boundary in sites labeled as a high priority level. |
| Roads | Identify necessary regular and reoccurring procedures needed to maintain primary access roads in order to prevent further deterioration. |
| | Identify the proper timing and intervals of regular maintenance for primary access roads. |
| | Add secondary routes to existing GIS road layer. |
| | Obliterate recently and future pioneered routes. |
| Noxious Weeds | Purchase weed-spraying equipment, in order to produce more effective measures of weed control. |

| WITHIN FIVE YEARS | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Issue | Action |
| Site Protection | Place barrier rocks within campsites and day use sites to delineate the site boundary in sites labeled as medium priority level. |
| | Implement restoration methods in sites with excessive resource impacts after barrier rockwork completion. |
| | Prioritize survey needs and write personal service contracts for completion of property boundary survey work. |
| Noxious Weeds | Inventory the species and location of noxious weeds. |
| | Determine the most effective treatment methods for different species of noxious weeds. |
| Financial and Human Resources | Develop a separate and distinct budget proposal for TCL based on Action Item 1. |
| | Explore and pursue retaining earned revenue accounts based on TCL user fees. |
| | Upgrade the park ranger position from .5 FTE to .75 FTE, under the condition that this additional FTE may be used in the creation of a manager position at a later time. |
| | Increase the FAS maintenance position(s) from .15 FTE to .30 FTE. |
| Trails | Consult with a variety of FWP professionals reviewing the legal, social, managerial, and natural resource factors that need to be considered to make an informed decision. |

| WITHIN TEN YEARS | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Issue | Action |
| Site Capacity | Install traffic counters at major access points throughout the TCL complex. |
| | Develop visitation formulas to extrapolate TCL recreation visitation. |
| Site Protection | Place barrier rocks within campsites and day use sites to delineate the site boundary in sites labeled as a low priority level. |
| Financial and Human Resources | Explore the creation of a joint Thompson River Recreation Corridor/TCL FAS site interdivisional manager position. |

APPENDIX A: LIST OF TCL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MEMBERS

Jim Davidson
TCL Homeowners Association

Warren Illi
Wildlife Interests

Ed Kennedy
Kalispell recreationist

Bruce Vincent
Libby recreationist

Rebecca Hendrix
Plum Creek Timber Company

Malcolm Edwards
USFS

Allan Kuser
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks

FILL-INS

Colleen Snyder

Mike Guthneck
USFS

Tom Reilly
MT Fish Wildlife & Parks

APPENDIX B: TCL QUESTIONNAIRE AND COMPILED RESULTS

TCL QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

BACKGROUND

The information below represents responses to a Thompson Chain of Lakes questionnaire that was mailed to individuals from a mass mailing list and also made available at local sporting goods stores in Kalispell and Libby. The questionnaire was mailed and made available in December 2003. The deadline to return completed questionnaires was January 31, 2004.

The responses are divided into three columns, representing landowners, non-landowners, and the combined total. Landowners are those individuals who own a home and/or property adjacent to the Thompson Chain of Lakes FAS. Non-landowners are those individuals who do not own a home and/or property adjacent to the Thompson Chain of Lakes FAS. Question 1 simply asked respondents whether they owned a home or property within the TCL complex, and that information is included below. Questions 2-7 were only relevant to non-landowners; therefore, responses were not tabulated for landowners.

Landowner Questionnaires Returned: 77

Non-Landowner Questionnaires Returned: 45

Total Questionnaires Returned: 122

L.O. = Landowner

Non-L.O. = Non-Landowner

Combined = Landowner and Non-Landowner combined

| | <u>L.O.</u> | <u>Non-L.O.</u> | <u>Combined</u> |
|--|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2. How many trips do you make annually to camp at TCL? | | | |
| 0-5: | N/A | 60% | N/A |
| 6-10: | N/A | 21% | N/A |
| 11-15: | N/A | 9% | N/A |
| over 15: | N/A | 10% | N/A |
| 3. How many days do you spend camping at TCL annually? | | | |
| 0-5: | N/A | 48% | N/A |
| 6-10: | N/A | 23% | N/A |
| 11-15: | N/A | 16% | N/A |
| over 15: | N/A | 13% | N/A |

| | <u>L.O.</u> | <u>Non-L.O.</u> | <u>Combined</u> |
|---|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 4. What type of camper do you use? | | | |
| Tent: | N/A | 19% | N/A |
| Trailer: | N/A | 38% | N/A |
| Pickup Camper: | N/A | 24% | N/A |
| Motor Home: | N/A | 26% | N/A |
| Other: | N/A | 0% | N/A |
| 5. How long is your vehicle/camper combination? | | | |
| less than 10': | N/A | 5% | N/A |
| 10-20': | N/A | 41% | N/A |
| 20-30': | N/A | 33% | N/A |
| over 30': | N/A | 21% | N/A |
| 6. On average, how many people are in your party? | | | |
| 1-3: | N/A | 51% | N/A |
| 4-6: | N/A | 37% | N/A |
| 7-9: | N/A | 5% | N/A |
| 10-12: | N/A | 2% | N/A |
| 13-15: | N/A | 5% | N/A |
| 7. How many days do you spend at TCL annually for day trips ? | | | |
| 0-5: | N/A | 47% | N/A |
| 6-10: | N/A | 28% | N/A |
| 11-15: | N/A | 7% | N/A |
| over 15: | N/A | 18% | N/A |
| 8. What activities do you participate in at TCL (check all that apply)? <i>Number equals the number of checks for each activity.</i> | | | |
| SWIMMING | | 63 (4) | 30 (3) |
| 93 (3) | | | |
| MOTOR BOATING | 58 (5) | 30 (3) | 88 (4) |
| NONMOTORIZED BOATING | 56 (6) | 12 (9) | 68 (8) |
| FISHING | 67 (1) | 40 (1) | 107 (1) |
| ATV RIDING | 37 (10) | 4 (10) | 41 (11) |
| MOUNTAIN BIKING | 16 (11) | 4 (10) | 20 (12) |
| GATHERING W/ FRIENDS | 66 (2) | 30 (3) | 96 (2) |
| PICNICKING | 42 (8) | 29 (4) | 71 (7) |
| FAMILY GATHERINGS/ REUNIONS | 55 (7) | 13 (8) | 68 (8) |

| | <u>L.O.</u> | <u>Non-L.O.</u> | <u>Combined</u> |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| HIKING/WALKING | 64 ⁽³⁾ | 17 ⁽⁶⁾ | 81 ⁽⁵⁾ |
| HUNTING | 41 ⁽⁹⁾ | 13 ⁽⁸⁾ | 54 ⁽¹⁰⁾ |
| WILDLIFE VIEWING | 56 ⁽⁶⁾ | 23 ⁽⁵⁾ | 79 ⁽⁶⁾ |
| PHOTOGRAPHY | 42 ⁽⁸⁾ | 14 ⁽⁷⁾ | 56 ⁽⁹⁾ |
| CAMPING | N/A | 38 ⁽²⁾ | N/A |

9. At TCL, in your opinion:

| | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Sites are too crowded: | 36% | 28% | 33% |
| Sites are not too crowded: | 64% | 72% | 67% |
| Law enforcement presence is sufficient: | 30% | 68% | 45% |
| Law enforcement presence is not sufficient: | 70% | 32% | 55% |
| Sites are littered: | 65% | 26% | 48% |
| Sites are not littered: | 35% | 74% | 52% |
| ATV use is a problem: | 45% | 35% | 41% |
| ATV use is not a problem: | 55% | 65% | 59% |
| Group camping areas are needed: | 60% | 46% | 54% |
| Group camping areas are not needed: | 40% | 54% | 46% |
| Unleashed dogs are an issue: | 42% | 38% | 40% |
| Unleashed dogs are not an issue: | 58% | 62% | 60% |
| Noise/partying at adjacent camps is an issue: | 36% | 33% | 35% |
| Noise/partying at adjacent camps is not an issue: | 64% | 67% | 65% |
| There are often problems with late night disturbances: | 33% | 23% | 29% |
| There are seldom problems with late night disturbances: | 67% | 77% | 71% |

10. Are the facilities (boat ramps, vault and portable toilets, fire rings, tables, roads, trails) of adequate quality and number for your needs?

| | <u>L.O.</u> | <u>Non-L.O.</u> | <u>Combined</u> |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Adequate in #: | 71% | 78% | 74% |
| Inadequate in #: | 29% | 22% | 26% |
| Adequate in quality: | 84% | 74% | 80% |
| Inadequate in quality: | 16% | 26% | 20% |

11. NARRATIVE

12. NARRATIVE

13. We have observed that a significant amount of the camping that occurs at TCL consists of friends or family groups, with one or more campers, and several vehicles coming in for the day. Would it be beneficial to have a group use area that could be reserved?

| | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| I support a reservable group use area: | 62% | 49% | 57% |
| I support a 1 st come, 1 st served group use area: | 18% | 23% | 20% |
| I do not support a group use area: | 20% | 28% | 23% |

14. If a group use area was created, what size group should it serve?

| | | | |
|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 10-20: | 60% | 69% | 63% |
| 20-50: | 35% | 23% | 30% |
| 50-100: | 5% | 8% | 7% |
| over 100: | 0% | 0% | 0% |

15. TCL is receiving more use than was identified as ideal in the management plan. There are options on how to deal with this. Should FWP:

| | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| Increase the # of camping units allowed at the individual campsites: | 24% | 54% | 35% |
| Not increase the # of camping units allowed. <i>This means people would not be able to stay when the campsites are at full capacity:</i> | 76% | 46% | 65% |

| | <u>L.O.</u> | <u>Non-L.O.</u> | <u>Combined</u> |
|---|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 16. If the last option is chosen, people may drive to TCL and not be able to find a site to camp. This will be particularly true for people who cannot leave home until late Friday afternoon. One method of dealing with this would be a reservation system. | | | |
| I would support a reservation system: | 67% | 38% | 56% |
| I would not support a reservation system: | 33% | 62% | 44% |
| 17. Camping capacities can be managed in two ways. Which do you prefer? | | | |
| Allow visitors to fit as many campers as they can within a defined camping area: | 22% | 52% | 34% |
| Designate individual campsites, allowing only one camping unit per site: | 78% | 48% | 66% |

TCL NARRATIVE COMMENTS

Landowners

Question #11: I would like to see future improvements such as:

McGregor Lake

- More toilets – occasional policing – keep day use/fishing access as such.
- More policing of areas to mainly stop vandalism.
- More law enforcement. Not so crowded.
- ATV areas, toilets, dust abatement
- More enforcement control for state campsites across lake from my home.
- “Litter and it will hurt” signs on Hwy 2, lakeside (McGregor and other lakes as well); litter picked up along Hwy 2 by lakes.

Middle Thompson Lake

- Fire rings at all campsites for each camping unit. Also vaulted toilets.
- Some tables could be replaced.
- Boat ramps (Crystal).
- Enforcement of existing sites and rules.
- More Sheriff/Game Officer patrols.
- More portable toilets.
- Warden on lake (official state boat) 24/7.
- Better signage.
- The road dust coated or chip seal. Speed limits signs put up.

Upper Thompson Lake

- Plant rainbow trout in Upper Thompson. Monitoring of jet skis and overall enforcement increased.
- More improvement of area as can be afforded.
- Campers using camp facilities and not private property.
- Additional toilet facilities, group camping areas for larger groups or family reunions (reserved & fee schedule).
- Noxious weed control. Enforce stay limits.

Crystal/Lavon/Bootjack

- Grate all roads.
- More patrolling by park ranger.
- Boat ramp on Crystal Lake.
- Boat ramps going into deeper water.
- Improved facilities at Turtle Bay – Crystal Lake.
- Regulated camping in designated campgrounds. No random camping.
- Increased law enforcement in regard to no-wake zones both boat and jet skis.
- Better boat ramps
- ATV trails reopened.
- Vault toilets.
- Less mechanized curtailment.
- Boat ramp on Crystal Lake.

- Need more visible law enforcement – still reckless use of boats/ATV's/jet skis. Some people probably still don't know regulations. Ice Fishing – not enough parking area at public access site on Lakeshore Drive, Crystal Lake. Add toilet (see if Lum Owens would donate added land for these facilities).
- Possibly more day use areas.
- Possibly more vault toilets.
- No more broken bottles and pieces of glass picked up.
- More roads closed to motor vehicles.
- Patrolling Horseshoe.
- A canoe trail from Loon Lake to Thompson River.
- Overflow camping areas – 2 or 3.

Non-Landowners

Question #11: I would like to see future improvements such as:

- Boat ramp at Lower Thompson. Camping at McGregor.
- More camping spots.
- Potable water.
- Non-burnable picnic tables.
- The Lower Thompson lake be reserved for non-motorized use.
- No shooting of guns in or anywhere around the area.
- More individual camping sites.
- Signage to locate access.
- More roads and primitive sites.
- Leave everything as is.
- A few more toilets.
- Some boat ramps need improvement.
- None.
- Let's keep it somewhat primitive.
- Remove older drought stressed trees to make more room for camping.
- Lower Thompson lake camping area has a pack-rat problem. Toilets were also full of flies and bugs.
- Improved access to dispersed sites, additional toilets at dispersed sites, improved boat launches on the larger lakes (Crystal and Loon), plowed parking spots for ice fishermen.
- Designated campsites, less littering, more outhouses.
- Some roads need improved.
- Fix the roads.
- More parking for day use vehicles with boat trailers.
- More parking at boat ramps.
- Loon lake boat dock on Hwy 2 needs to be dredged out so you can get boats in and out – not deep enough. Upper Thompson Lake is the same. A must and Middle Thompson lake.
- If there are going to be portable toilets, keep them clean.
- More camp spaces for large families.
- Satisfied as is.
- Fix road.
- Emergency phone booths for safety – big map showing camping areas.
- Dog control at boat ramp area. Drive through sites for motor homes with towed cars.
- Group area (site) at Logan Park.
- Better areas to leave boat in water at night, so we don't have to load and unload each day.
- Everything is fine at Upper Thompson Lake.
- The toilets being cleaner and not so smelly. Lots of roads improved if this (camping fees) passes.
- Paved roads into campgrounds – designated ATV trails.
- Control and patrol enforcing the # of campers/spot/posted rules. More and better-maintained toilets!

Landowners

Question #12: I would not like to see the following facilities installed:

McGregor Lake

- Paving – Full blown campground designation.
- No more than can handle or given.
- No commercial operations, such as mini-mart selling alcohol.
- Campground adjacent to McGregor Lake.
- More campsites without lavatory facilities along the lake.
- McGregor is the cleanest and most pristine of the TCL lakes. Limit the number of campsites so as not to threaten it's ecology and it's pristine beauty.

Middle Thompson Lake

- Boat ramps, trails.
- ATV trails

Upper Thompson Lake

- None. The ones that are present do not get monitored or checked.
- The area can only support a certain number of people – don't over crowd it.
- More camping spots.
- Paved roads.

Crystal/Lavon/Bootjack

- Fees.
- Boat launch – Crystal Lake.
- Let's keep it primitive.
- No more facilities on Crystal.
- Any camping allowed around "Green Cove" of Crystal or on the "Point" there. No need and is a quiet shallow spot.
- No public access at Crystal Lake.
- Restrooms and more campsites.
- More boat ramps.
- Overnight camping with campfire rings on Crystal or Lavon.
- No campgrounds or day-use areas on Crystal Lake FWP ownerships for now. Continue.

Non-Landowners

Question #12: I would not like to see the following facilities installed:

- Flush toilets, paved roads, gates.
- Larger group facilities; boat ramp on Lower Thompson.
- Commercial enterprises.
- Anything that will cost me money to camp.

- Leave everything as is.
- Keep it primitive!
- None.
- Most units are self-contained. I don't see any need to spend sportsman's fees on upgrading sites.
- Going to all developed sites. Keep a mixture of dispersed and developed sites.
- No commercial activities.
- Tables.
- Camp hosts, fees.
- More organized camping sites.
- Tables, showers.
- Concession stands.
- No more "all night" lights at campsites.
- Private or concession operation/mgt. at Logan Park.
- An on-site camp host at this time.
- No pay. I pay taxes in Lincoln Co. now, have for years.
- No camping or day use fees. No camp host.

Additional Comments (Landowners):

McGregor Lake

- Need an "in between solution" to #17 – Multiple units "not to exceed" at designated campsites.
- Response to question #15: "I see no problem with adding more camping spaces only if this does not make the camping spots closer together (like sardines)." Additional Comments: I am pleased to see there are toilets at the East end area campsites – for years there were none. Most people are very good. Last season we had several disturbing campers – dogs barking constantly – shooting of firearms, loud music till 2:00 – 4:00 in the morning, large campfires in very dry conditions – trash in water (lake).
- Too much junk is thrown into fire rings. Mainly cans.
- Let's have fun by making areas safe.
- Response to question #17: "Maybe up to 2 units of immediate family or friends."
- My wife and I live on state lease #15 on McGregor Lake year around. The only problem we have is the area across the lake from us along US Highway We feel this area needs to be developed and patrolled or closed to camping. Last fire season we had a lot of trouble with people with drinking and campfires!
- I own a home on McGregor. It is used principally for summers. My concern is that more campers and campsites will increase pollution of the shoreline and waters. I have seen very little law enforcement from either FWP or the county sheriff. Lake address – 100 Violet Bay Dr.
- Response to question #16: "Perhaps leave a few sites open for people who do not make reservations. Additional Comments: I do not camp at the TCL sites, but I do not like to see overcrowded campgrounds because it degrades the natural resources."
- We have a 75-foot lot on McGregor that we bought years ago, with the intention of building a summer home. For various reasons we have not done this. Since we live most of the year in Seattle, we are not familiar with the recreation areas in the TCL area.
- Response to question #13: "More than 1 as a combo reserve – nonreserve." Additional Comments: The existing, closed road system on the south side of McGregor would make a great ATV area. More toilets are needed at camp areas. ?Dumpsters may be a good idea. 7 to 14 day limit should be enforced.
- I do not camp at TCL – I have a cabin on state lease land – I must abide by the state rules re setback from the lake – septic system approval – cleanliness etc. Why let campsites within a few feet of the lakeshore on state land when we pay upwards of \$5000 yearly for our lease, which is closely monitored by the DNRC. Why can't I move my cabin down to within 20 ft of the lake and use the woods for my sanitary facility?
- Noise pollution, smoke pollution, litter pollution: Control the 3 "P's" by limiting their causes – recreational users. For your consideration – "Public opinion" should include not only the "wants" of campers and fishermen, and snowmobilers who use the TCL lakes on a transient basis, but also the lakeside

owners and adjacent landowners who have to permanently put up with the negative effects of recreational users, e.g., motorboat wakes, snowmobile noise, beer cans, bon fire remains on the ice, etc (you get the picture?). In fact, lake owner decisions should have priority, followed by adjacent landowners, followed lastly by the wants of recreational users and FWP, which attempts to provide the means to satisfy their recreational wants. Additional Comments: Since FWP is a public entity, you are subject to public pressures for more and more campsites. I believe you need to be equally as concerned with the desires of surrounding landowners who are paying taxes and who do not want the value of their investments diminished by transient campers who come to TCL and leave it a mess as well as the private lands and roadways which surround it. Limit the number of campers and campsites and provide the funding means to pick up after them. Also, I am sure that lakeside owners do not want to suffer the negative smoke effects from campers who continuously burn wood fires. I have several years experience as a seasonal Park Ranger on the East Coast and I am quite familiar with the problems associated with multitudes of transient campers who bring with them litter, “partying” and drugs. For the sake of TCL’s ecology/pristine beauty, limit the number of campers and their trash now, while you still can.

Middle Thompson Lake

- Whatever the decision as far as improvements, campsites etc., please enforce existing and future land use rules and regulations!!!
- Increased patrolling is needed in TCL! When the fee system starts this spring, increased FWP presence is a must to make the system work! If the plan doesn’t succeed properly, it will be solely due to FWP shortcomings.
- If campers would pay a small fee to use the camping areas, maybe more law enforcement or rangers could be present.
- The most problems we have here are wave runners. They are rude and don’t adhere to rules.
- FWP needs to stock more bass and salmon in the Thompson Lakes. Catch rate is getting very poor!
- Eliminate wolf population. Control mountain lion and stock lakes.
- I have heard from friends and have seen this myself in campsite by our house. People bring a camper out several days or a week before 3-day holidays to reserve a spot. That is where enforcement or reservation system would help.
- Most of the questions/issues of concern are not directly significant to the operation of the Baptist camp at Middle Thompson. Glacier Southern Baptist Association is the property owner in question and I’m responding as their agent (chairman of the committee to oversee the facilities). Please contact me if I can further clarify the use and appreciation for your work in managing the TCL.
- We support charging for all campsites, no camping without toilets, camping only in defined camping areas, more presence of FWP to enforce rules, and patrolling to control wildfires.
- Warden Captain Edward Kelly is hard to work with. Local warden firm, but shows respect to those he polices.
- We own property on Middle Thompson. We visit the property approximately 4 times per year. Our family members visit the property once a month for fishing and upkeep. My interest is in keeping the campsites to a minimum on a pay basis for use and use the income to maintain the campsites and prevent overcrowding. Several sites could be set-up as no-charge, first-come.
- We are on the east end of Middle Thompson Lake. The dust in late summer is very bad. If there was some speed limit sign put up this would help. We own a half-mile of the road ACM and would like to see this problem addressed.

Upper Thompson Lake

- In recent years we have put out 2 fires started by people picking out their own campsite! There needs to be stiff penalties for those who “do their own thing”!!
- Jet ski use should be restricted to the large lakes only – McGregor and Middle Thompson. Jet ski traffic on the smaller lakes is extremely annoying and disruptive. Also, enforcement of existing regulations should be strictly monitored. We have frequently observed jet ski use in violation of those regulations – i.e., too close to shore, underage operators etc.

- Response to question #16: “This would allow you to know who is at most of the sites on any given weekend and would facilitate keeping the sites clean and litter free.” Additional Comments: The TCL is over used by campers both Libby and Kalispell folks use these lakes. With what’s happened at Bitterroot, Ashley and McGregor, these people don’t have many options left. I thin some pressure could be transferred if some sites were set up down Thompson River, Island Lake, Twin Lakes or any other spot where people could recreate outside of a “campground”. Also, the fishing pressure is way too heavy on all the lakes.
- It is a popular area and is being used a lot. Some rules have to be made and enforced.
- Response to question #17: Designating individual campsites... “this will protect the integrity of the campground.”
- All of these changes will require enforcement. To this point, enforcement has been simple vocal reprimands. Ticketed violators need monetary fines. Additionally, FWP needs to have more law enforcement people on sites more frequently. The opportunity to use our natural resources comes with responsibility. Responsibility requires enforcement for those that do follow the rules as opposed to those that break them.
- I support a fee system for camping with discounts for MT residents. Use of camping Hosts that stay at sites may help with litter control and other law enforcement needs and reduce vandalism. Dust control on roads if roads are minimally maintained. Need to do noxious weed control. On Upper Thompson Lake, need to eliminate motorboats over 10 horse power and jet skis. No-Wake for entire Upper Thompson. Need to continue to protect nesting Loons.

Crystal/Lavon/Bootjack

- It has always been my thought that the different campsites could be managed by volunteers like the cleaning of the state highways. I’m not sure of the liability issue – but sure it could be handled.
- Allow salvage logging to take care of dead and drying and high-risk trees. Allow forest thinning to reduce fire hazard. Use money from forest harvest to increase law enforcement and patrolling of Chain of Lakes.
- Our property on Lavon was cleared by myself over 20 years ago. Most of the property around us has been purchased and developed since. We notice a lot of people cruising by our place looking for a place to launch their boats.
- I believe major improvement has occurred in recent years regarding the “management” of campers and visitors. We need to regulate new pioneering of campsites and improve how we deal with surplus campers. We just can’t accommodate ever-increasing numbers of campers. Need greater FWP “presence” to keep campers under control.
- We would like to see signage posted for all “no-wake” lakes. Develop a small # of campsites in Turtle Cove on Crystal as people camp there anyway.
- Please do not underestimate how many landowners in the area make short trips – just a few times – to the lakes to swim and fish. Please do not turn all areas over to overnight campers. Short day use has historically been very important there.
- I would like for Fish and Game to allow at least one bull trout in Lake Kokanousa to be kept, as most of them that tried to swallow a big lure will die.
- Crystal lake is too crowded. I worry about trash and pollution at all campsites and lakes. We need to protect from overuse. Not enough patrol. Reservation system great idea. Thanks for asking for input!
- The area is feeling the increased pressure from not only campers but from a large number of new private lots. The “TOTAL” usage must be considered as a whole. With the increased private lots around and behind Upper Thompson, the total people using the area has increased and consumed the available usage for campers. That is why we feel no additional campsites should be developed.
- It is a worry - open camping and open campfires. Campers leave without extinguishing fires. We have had 2 summers with many forest fires. We don’t need to add to the natural problems. The lakes are low, we need to conserve our water and quality.
- Would like to see more fish stocked in Crystal Lake. No more no-wake areas to be enforced in the area. Let the people recreate instead of putting more rules on them. I think you people are doing a pretty good job over all out there. Keep up the good work.
- It was a big mistake to allow camping on Crystal Lake (Green Cove) with no sanitation facilities available and no supervision. There were several fires last summer when it was tinder dry and there was a litter

problem all summer. You should also be aware that a couple from Kalispell parks their 5th wheel near the access for boat launching from April through the summer. People cannot launch boats at all except with a lot of jockeying around. They pay no fee and they are there all summer long.

- When I (we) come to Montana, we live in a cabin on Crystal Lake. Because of this, I'm not qualified to answer most of the questions. I do think that people should know the rules for boating safety, and that those rules should be enforced.
- As an owner of property, I feel that it is important to involve the property owners in any decision concerning the TCL, be it state, fed, or private lands. Thank you for this opportunity.
- The ice fishermen leave trash on the ice. The boat fishermen have very successfully lobbied the MT FWP to curtail the water skiers and jet skis. This is a bad thing as many of us utilize this area for water skiing and jet boating. This MT FWP is obviously only concerned about the fishermen!
- Why can't State Lands and Fish, Wildlife & Parks cooperate during the summer months? State Lands is out there every day during summer fire season. Why can't they perform some enforcement and thus keep costs down!! We spend just about every weekend at the lake.
- I would like to see more patrols on lakes in summer to enforce no-wake zones and to monitor boating safety. Many lakes are crowded with boaters either underage or inexperienced. Also, more enforcement during hunting season.
- Response to question #14: Similar to types at Apgar campground in GNP. Response to question #15: Double current capacity – increase enforcement. Colin – tough job you folks have but you need to be commended. TCL has become popular. My comments on Crystal regard an already heavily used lake – even on weekend winter days. I am concerned about water quality vs. over-use. Not easy solutions but reservation system may be needed – at least on trial basis in certain areas. Wildlife abundance and quality fishing are problems. Loons continue to be threatened. Further subdivision hasn't helped – beyond your control but it does impact your job. I believe (somehow) there needs to be a compliment of adherence to FWP Management Plan, both public and private ownership. We all need to be responsible for future quality of area!
- We own a cabin on Crystal Lake. We would like to see a fee charged for campground use on all the TCL. By charging for use, the State can better upkeep the camp areas. Landowners pay through our property taxes – campers should pay their fair share.
- Response to question #9, regarding noise/partying and late night disturbances: I can hear parties/music at my home from Horseshoe, Cad, Cibid lakes. Also some very noisy boats and jet skis. Response to question #13: Support group camping...only in existing campsites. Response to question #16: Support reservation system in... July/Aug months only. Additional Comments: I've been using this area for the last 50 years. This area has experienced a major increase in use (during summer months) in the last 15 years. I only use the area lakes in the winter months for ice fishing and hunt whitetail/elk since there is very limited camping use in the fall. Noise and ATV traffic has been a problem. I would not like to see any more camping sites created.
- There should be a phone number to call if another campsite is destructive or making loud disturbing noise – perhaps posted at entrance bulletin board. We live near-by Horseshoe and Crystal Lakes with no lake front property. We enjoy day-use only.
- It appears to me a lot of people enjoy riding ATV's on the roads in TCL. Lately a lot of roads have been blocked off. I suppose to reduce erosion but most of these areas are not steep and erosion does not appear to be a major problem. I would like to see these roads left open as the kids seem to really enjoy them.
- More of the old logging roads closed and made into walking trails. New trails made on backside of some lakes. Make a platform at Lilly Pad Lake for birders, east end. Stock some lakes and close them for a year to provide bigger fish.
- Response to question #13: Support group camping area...needs to be monitored, like McGilvary on reservoir, Libby Dam area. Response to question #15: Only 3 camping units maximum. Create more campsites. Response to question #16: Support a reservation system...if there is no cost.
- I would gladly be available to help identify overflow of group sites.

Additional Comments (Non-Landowners):

- I hope "we" can avoid charging a fee for the areas that at present are free. There are still many families that like to camp but can't afford these extra charges. I am referring in the areas of Upper Thompson Lake and Lower Thompson Lake.

- Every year it seems more and more people are out enjoying our lakes and forests. But in typical government fashion, the Forest Service and FWP close off more and more recreational areas and camping areas. We need more camping spots not less. A lot of times areas that trailer campers can use are full of tents and the areas that you have blocked off for tents only are empty. More primitive trailer spots are needed.
- I don't mind paying for camping as long as it is enforced and people are checked at McGregor Lake (south of McGregor Lake Resort). I'm tired of the noise and the overuse and inconsiderate people who come out and party all night and litter up the place. It would be nice to have water available at Lower Thompson Lake. I would like to see an RV disposal at old Boisvert's site and have the disposals open until November 10th or after the 1st week of hunting season.
- As the world increases it's noise and congestion, a piece of quiet is rare. Allowing only non-motorized on the smallest lake – even with adjacent highway – would carve a much-appreciated experience into the camping experience.
- We live in Montana to be able to use our lakes without somebody trying to control every move. We live in Montana, have low wages, pay high taxes and should be able to use our lakes without being charged or controlled. This is why we live here. Locals should have unlimited access.
- There are lots of people in the area camping or just walking around. Each year somebody needs to shoot at something or another. It's just a matter of time until something happens.
- Trash pick up. Non-fee use and registration, to help monitor usage.
- More dispersed primitive sites for tents less crowding everybody together. Free camping, free boat launches. Pack it in – pack it out areas. RV's can be parked together. Jet skis are a problem – disturb everybody, make dangerous wakes.
- Since many of the questionnaire's topics don't apply to Plum Creek, I'll just make a few brief comments. Setting the number of allowable camping units at TCL should be based on an analysis of potential impacts to the surrounding natural resources, including but not limited to; water quality, soil compaction and dust creation, impacts to vegetation and wildlife, and weed dispersal. Before any increase in camping units is allowed, FWP also needs to evaluate whether or not they have the personnel and funding available to manage additional campers. Already, most of the traffic on the ACM road is from recreational use, not homeowners or commercial use. In the past, FWP has had inadequate funding for dust abatement on the ACM road. There also is currently not enough manpower available to adequately monitor and prevent illegal activities such as firewood theft and off-road use. If you would like to follow-up on any comments do not hesitate to give me a call.
- Please leave everything as is.
- Response to question #9: Sites are not too crowded... "but would not allow more per site." Sites are littered... "especially walk-in sites." Response to question #13: Support group use area that could be reserved... "Maybe Upper Thompson site E11 – plenty of parking and removed from other sites (would need toilet)."
- I like the improvements that have happened in the last 10 years – (Keep going).
- Response to question #17: Designate individual campsites, allowing only one camping unit per site... "the system you have in effect now seem good. Such as: D4, E6 etc."
- Host has been very good. In the park he keeps things done up very well.
- Response to question #17: Designate individual campsites, allowing only one camping unit per site... "Make certain number of camp sites for multiple campers."
- There could be additional camping areas opened up. However, if there is going to be a fee charged to stay at TCL, our whole family will discontinue using the area altogether. Our whole family and circle of friends feel the state should not invite out of staters to visit Montana if there are not places for them to recreate. Local people should not be crowded out to make room for others.
- You need a law enforcement officer to patrol this area after dark. I have witnessed fireworks being set off during the "closed fire season" at 1:00 a.m. on Lower Thompson Lake. Road into Lower Thompson Lake campground trees are too close to the road. Should be 5 ft minimum on both sides. Height from top road to lowest tree branch should be a minimum of 14 ft. Winter fishing allow use of 6 tip-ups for Northern Pike and remove 15 fish limit. Salmon fishing: Increase limit from 10 to 20. We had bigger fish in the lakes when the limit was 20. Last winter we caught more 1 to 2 pound Northerns in deep water where we were Salmon fishing. In previous years, these small Northerns were not being caught in the deep water where the Salmon are.

- Response to #15: Increase the number of camping units allowed at individual campsites... “on the larger lakes only.” Response to #16: I would support a reservation system... “for group use areas only. 1st come, 1st served at other sites.” Additional Comments: Top priority should be given to having maintained toilets at dispersed sites. The ones installed in the last few years have been a big improvement. The area gets heavily used by ice fishermen. Some of the existing roads and parking areas need to be plowed out so fishermen can park off the highway.
- Put in as many designated campsites as possible including group sites. However, designate where camper units can go by using containment and level pad parking areas. Also provide lighted outhouses and either have elevated enforcement or patrolling camp hosts. Let’s face it, the area is a known party spot including unsafe firearms and vandalism.
- When the state was given (or traded for TCL), the original plan seemed to be that the people who used TCL in the agreement were not to be charged day use fees. Why does the state plan to go back on their word and change this to a pay per campsite? It’s going to be non-profitable for the state and totally wrong.
- We feel you are doing well in most areas. It’s much better than it was 10 years ago. Thanks. Roads and dust control could be a problem in the future.
- No fees.
- I would support a daily charge per campsite to try to limit the amount of people and the amount of days they stay.
- TCL doesn’t need over management! One state park on the Chain of Lakes is enough!!
- I am disabled and wife is too, and I was out at Loon Lake and Upper Thompson Lake and Middle and it’s too shallow at boat ramps to get boats in and get off of docks to get in boats. Got stuck in the bottom of the lakes’ in mud and sand for loading and launching. I have a 15-foot flat bottom boat and long trailer tong and still had trouble. Please look into dredging deeper for boats. Thank you.
- I think we are over organizing TCL – we are taking away the rustic feeling of camping.
- I think the biggest issue is the campsite capacities. Families with higher number have problems with finding a campsite. Having some more campsites with bigger capacities would be beneficial to more people.
- I think the installation of a shower facility at Middle Thompson Lake was a very good move. It would be nice to have more shower facilities like at Lower Thompson Lake and McGregor Lake.
- No fees.
- Response to question #9: ...often problems with late night disturbances... “garbage pickup at 3 a.m.” Response to question #14: 20-50 people... “TCL is not large enough for larger numbers.” Response to question #16: Note - ...recommend a number of sites by reservation and other sites for 1st come, 1st served. Additional Comments: Set aside an area strictly for individual campsites and at opposite end an area where family/friends could camp as a group unit – yet still pay for each as an individual. Note: We would use the lakes more if the Thompson River road was hardtop – not dusty pot holes/mud.
- Response to question #9: Group camping areas are needed... “undeveloped land to west of Logan Park could be a group area.” Unleashed dogs are not an issue... “as long as are on a leash.” Response to question #13: I support creating a group use area that could be reserved... “at Logan Park or Lower Thompson.” Response to question #15: “Additional option should be to develop additional sites.” Additional Comments: Enlarge and lengthen several parking strips at Logan Park. Develop a vegetative management plan to replace all the hazard tree and blow down removal (Plant 6 ft + trees at selected spots). Prepare a large-scale handout map of area to show where all the sites are at. Improve boat ramps at Upper Thompson and all other lakes to west. May need additional volunteers for all other undeveloped sites. If there will be a charge at all the undeveloped sites, probably will increase use at Logan Park; unless fees are less than the park. Sure would be nice to develop a nice campground and boat launch at Ashley Lake.
- You didn’t address the issue of things that are burnt in fire rings. Some items such as plastic wrap and Styrofoam should be in trash bins or packed out. I see times when people clear a campsite by burning everything. May be clean but some things should not be burnt. Thank you.
- More bathrooms so there will be less poop on trails. Garbage dumpster going out of lake so some people will use it. Tell Kalispell people to leave trail bikes at home. They are the ones riding around through camps at night.
- Response to question #17: Currently some sites can easily fit more than one unit. These sites could be used for this purpose within reason with each unit paying for an individual spot. We also believe that the

cost per unit for dry camping is pushing the limit – as most areas we stay at while traveling for full hookups including cable are \$26.00.

- I'm sorry if I wasn't able to help you more, but I moved down to Boise, ID. I go up to our family cabin at Upper Thompson Lake about 2-3 weeks each year. So I never have to go camping. So I don't know if I was helpful at all. Probably the only concern is at Upper Thompson Lake with all of the new property around the lake and the Rainbow Lake area. I just hope that there's not too much boating pressure. Do the people owning property by the Rainbow Lake area have main access to Upper Thompson Lake? In the future, there might be too many boats and there might be a "no-wake" law. I just don't want too much pressure with this small of a lake.
- We want it left the way it is.
- Response to question #9: ATV use is a problem... "during the summer." Response to question #13: I support creating a group camping area, but it should be first come, first served... "because if it could be reserved, someone with a lot of money could reserve it for years and have their own little piece of heaven and to hell with other people." Response to question #15: Commenting on "not increasing the number of camping units allowed."... "Are we not the people – and this is not lawful to exclude people so you better make more sites than the available ones in other areas." Additional Comments: We the "people", of the "people", for the "people", and by the "people" are slowly being taken over completely. The ones paying taxes already pay for the poor and the rich alike. The poor don't have it and the rich have loopholes around it. If there is a reserved spot, guess who will always have it. "Money People". So to make that fair, please don't have a reserved area if you make a group area. There are hundreds of acres around those lakes. Clear a bunch of it and make room for any amount of camping. Why also should people be allowed to buy on the lakes and take away from all people wanting to get to the lakes? There should be at least a path along each owner's property lines so people could access the lake if you want to get right down serious. By the way, what is "shoulder" season? I would like this answered.
- All fees (or most) collected should remain with TCL. Campers should not be allowed to set up and hold campsites without at least sleeping there. Many folks put campers out on Wednesday to hold for weekend. Will require at least some reservations. Needs regular patrolling by authority!!

APPENDIX C: PROPOSED GROUP SITES

| Lake | Current Site | New Site Number | Maximum Capacity |
|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Horseshoe | L8 | G1 | 12 Camper Units |
| Horseshoe | L2 | G2 | 12 Camper Units |
| Upper Thompson | E10 | G3 | 8 Camper Units |
| Upper Thompson | E6 (east portion of site) | G4 | 8 Camper Units |
| Lower Thompson | C3-8 & 9 | G5 | 8 Camper Units |
| Lower Thompson | C1 | G6 | 8 Camper Units |
| Lower Thompson | C7 | G7 | 8 Camper Units |
| McGregor | A4 | G8 | 8 Camper Units |

APPENDIX D: PROPOSED CAPACITY CHART

| LAKE | SITE | CURRENT CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | PROPOSED# OF SEPARATE CAMPSITES | RESULTING MAXIMUM CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | DIFFERENCE IN MAX. CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | NEW CAMPSITE NUMBERS | COMMENTS |
|-----------------|-----------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|--|------------------------------------|
| McGregor | A1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 83 | |
| | A2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 82 | |
| | A3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 81 | |
| | A4 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 4 | G8 | Group |
| | A5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 80 | |
| | A6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 79 | |
| | A7 | 3 | 1 | 2 | -1 | 78 | |
| Little McGregor | B1 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 75,76,77 | |
| Lower Thompson | C1 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 4 | G6 | Group |
| | C2 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 59,60,61,62 | remove site #4 |
| | C3 | 12 | 10 | 28 (8 Unit Group Site) | 14 | 49,50,51,52, 53, 54,55,56,57, 58,G5 | 10 Separate Sites + 1 Group |
| | C4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 73,74 | |
| | C5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 72 | |
| | C6 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 70,71 | |
| | C7 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 4 | G7 | Group |
| | C8 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 68,69 | |
| | C9 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 67 | |
| | | | | | | | |

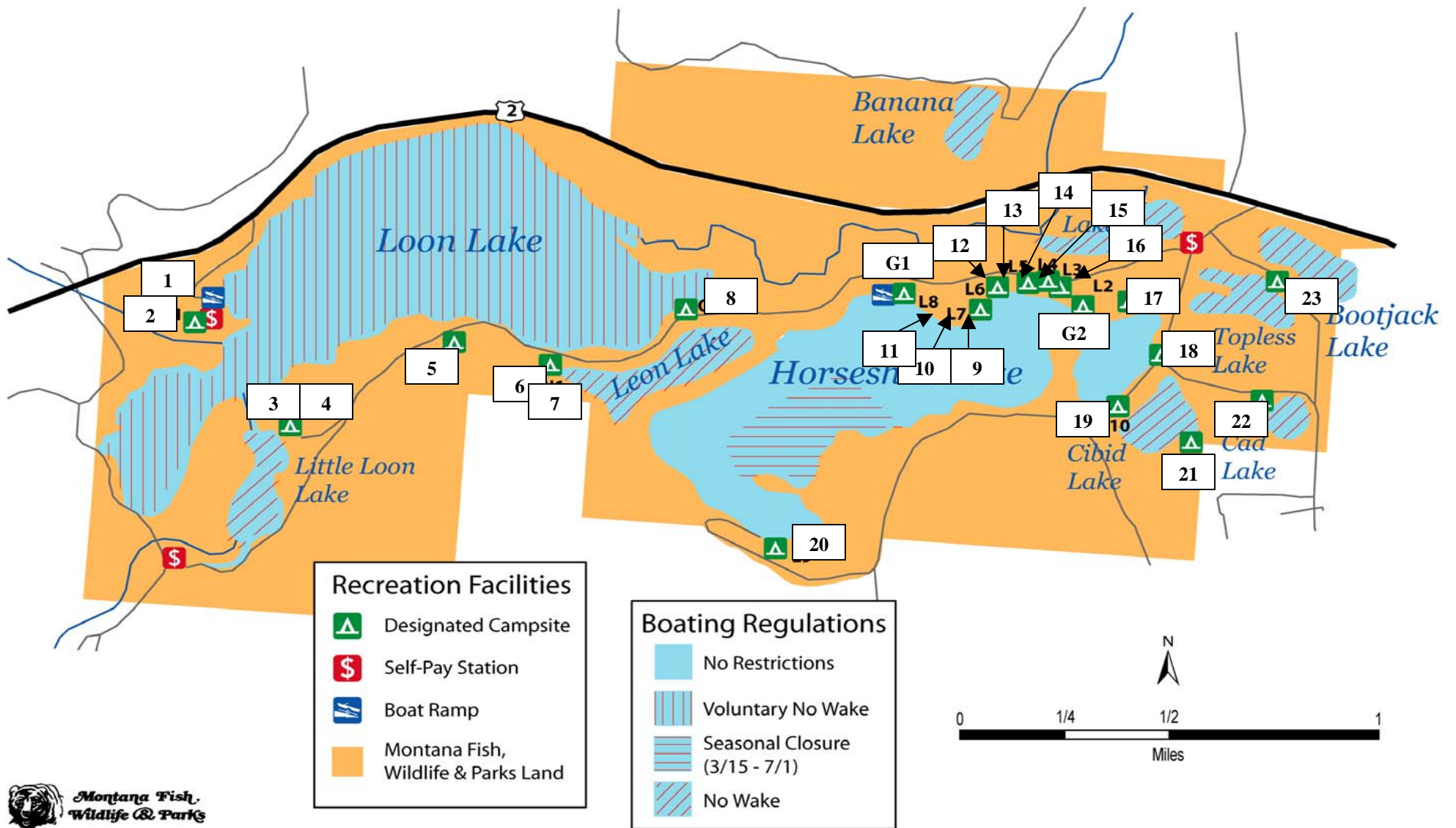
| LAKE | SITE | CURRENT CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | PROPOSED# OF SEPARATE CAMPSITES | RESULTING MAXIMUM CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | DIFFERENCE IN MAX. CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | NEW CAMPSITE NUMBERS | COMMENTS |
|-----------------|------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|----------------------|--|
| | C10 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 66 | |
| | C11 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 64,65 | |
| | C12 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 63 | |
| Middle Thompson | D1 | 10 | 6 | 12 | 2 | 40,41,42,43, 44,45 | remove site #2,4,8,9 keep sites #1,3,5,6,7, 10 |
| | D2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 39 | |
| | D3 | 6 | 1 | 2 | -4 | 38 | |
| | D4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 47,48 | |
| | D5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 46 | |
| Upper Thompson | E1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 31 | |
| | E2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 29,30 | |
| | E3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 27 | |
| | E4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 28 | |
| | E5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 26 | |
| | E6 | 4 | 1 | 10 (8 Unit Group Site) | 6 | 25 & G4 | Group |
| | E7 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 24 | |
| | E8 | 5 | 2 | 4 | -1 | 36, 37 | |
| | E9 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 35 | |
| | E10 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 4 | G3 | Group |

| LAKE | SITE | CURRENT CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | PROPOSED# OF SEPARATE CAMPSITES | RESULTING MAXIMUM CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | DIFFERENCE IN MAX. CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | NEW CAMPSITE NUMBERS | COMMENTS |
|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|----------------------|--------------|
| | E11 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 33,34 | |
| | E12 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 32 | |
| Horseshoe | L1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | -2 | 17 | |
| | L2 | 4 | 0 | 12 | 8 | G2 | Group |
| | L3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 16 | |
| | L4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 15 | |
| | L5 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 13,14 | |
| | L6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 12 | |
| | L7 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 9,10,11 | |
| | L8 | 4 | 0 | 12 | 8 | G1 | Group |
| | L9 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 20 | |
| | L10 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 19 | |
| | L11 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 18 | |
| Topless | I1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 23 | |
| Cibid | J1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 21 | |
| Cad | H1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | -1 | 22 | |
| Leon | N1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 6,7 | |
| Loon | O1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1,2 | |
| | O2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 | |

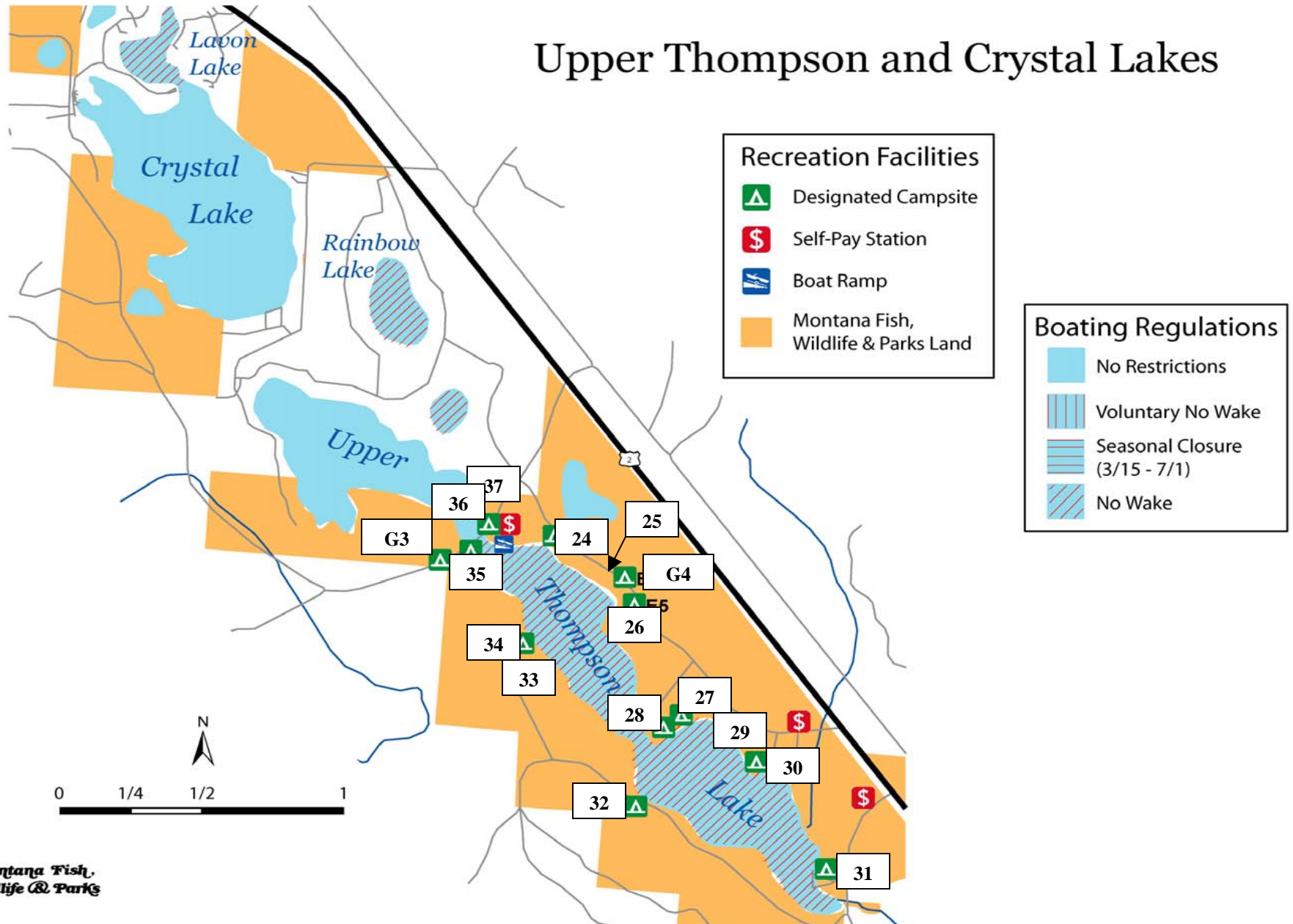
| LAKE | SITE | CURRENT CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | PROPOSED# OF SEPARATE CAMPSITES | RESULTING MAXIMUM CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | DIFFERENCE IN MAX. CAMPER UNIT CAPACITY | NEW CAMPSITE NUMBERS | COMMENTS |
|---------------|------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------|----------|
| | O3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | -1 | 8 | |
| Little Loon | P1 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 3,4 | |
| Totals | | 152 | 83 | 238 | 88 | 1-83, G1-G8 | |

APPENDIX E: MAPS ILLUSTRATING PROPOSED NUMBERING SYSTEM

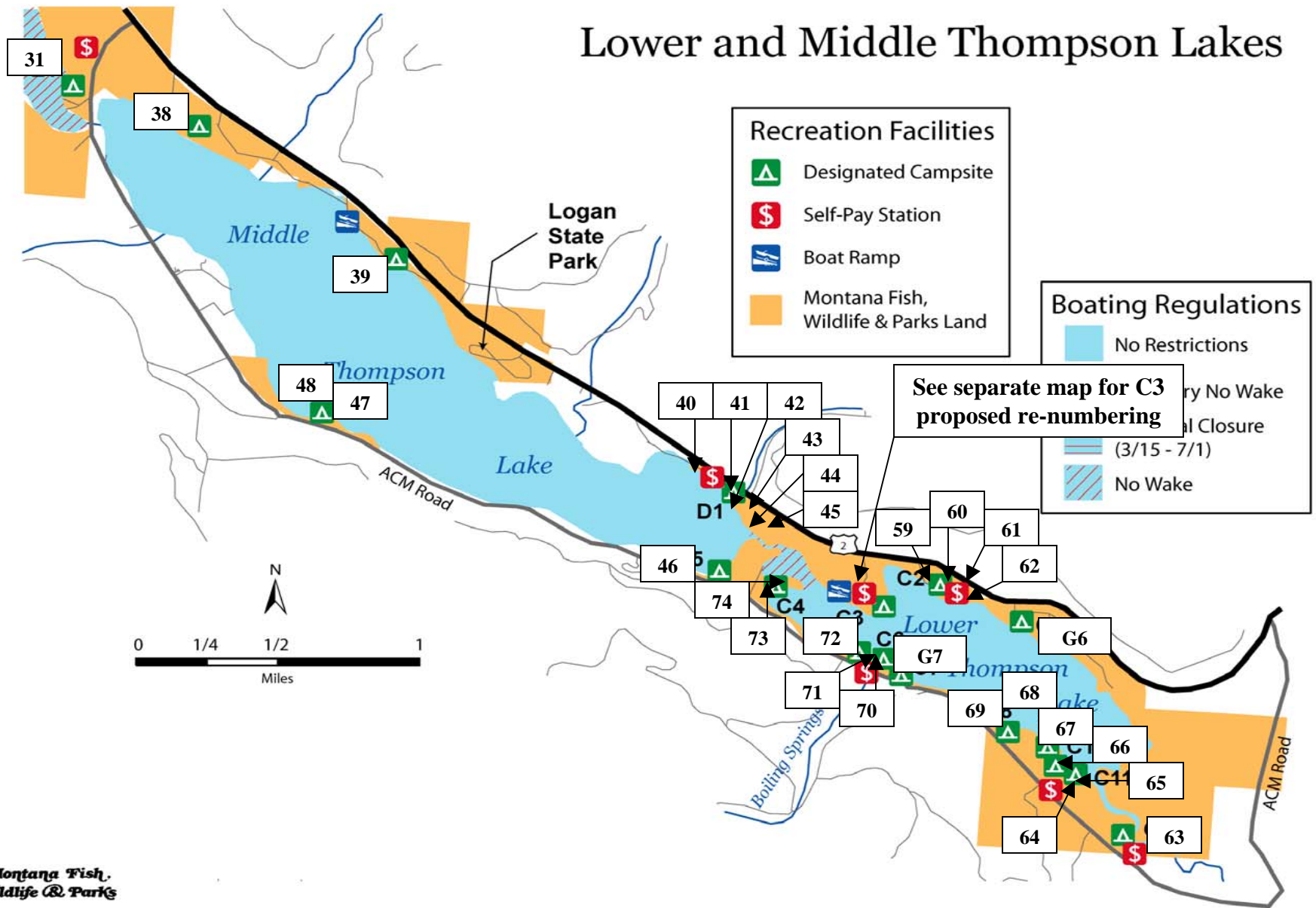
Horseshoe - Loon Lakes



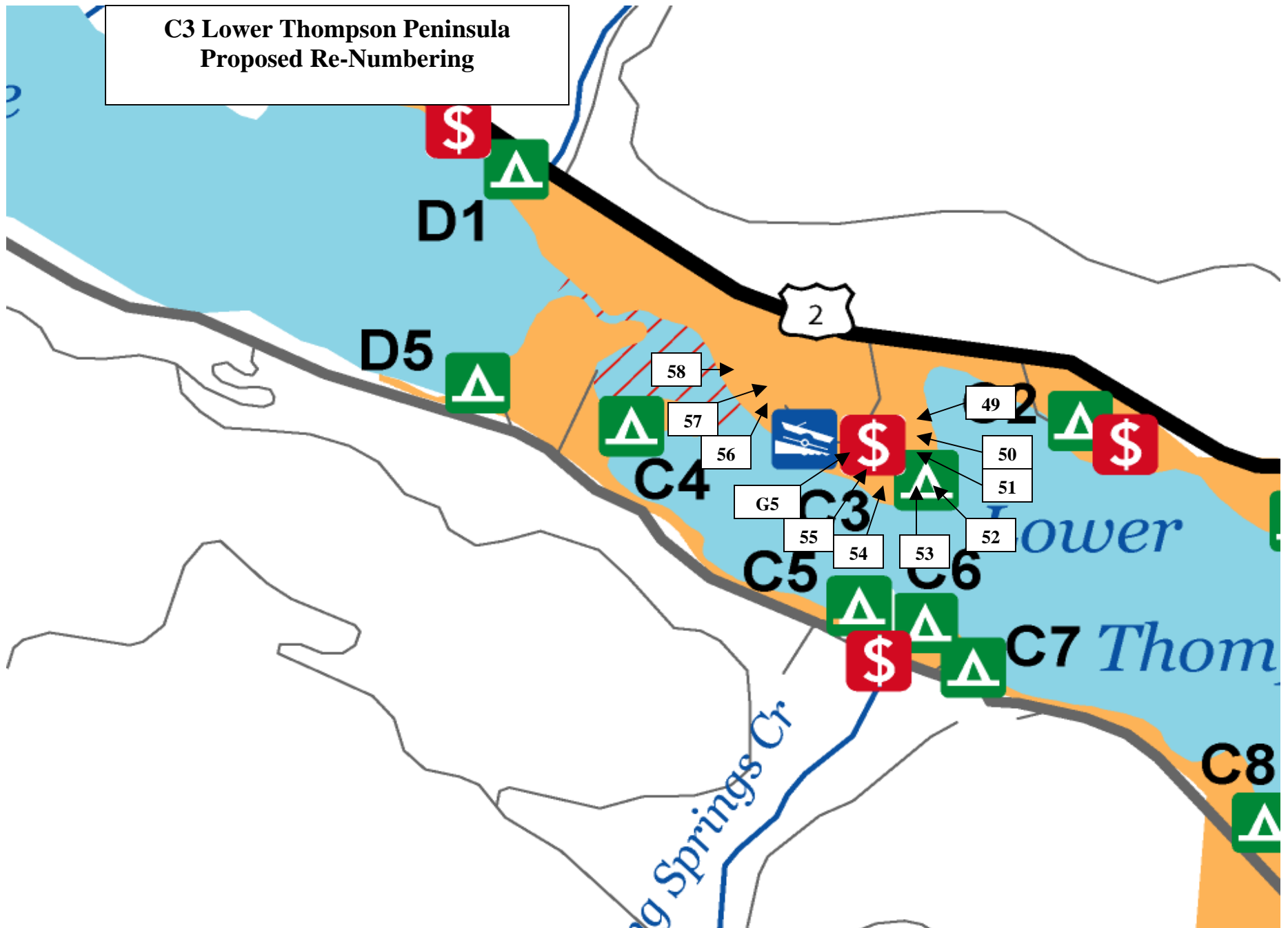
Upper Thompson and Crystal Lakes



Lower and Middle Thompson Lakes



**C3 Lower Thompson Peninsula
Proposed Re-Numbering**



McGregor Lake

Boisvert
FAS

Little
McGregor
Lake

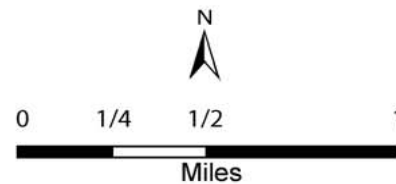
McGregor
Lake

Recreation Facilities

-  Designated Campsite
-  Self-Pay Station
-  Boat Ramp
-  Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Land

Boating Regulations

-  No Restrictions
-  Voluntary No Wake
-  Seasonal Closure (3/15 - 7/1)
-  No Wake



APPENDIX F: PROPOSED CAMPSITE NUMBERING CHART

| Lake | Site | New campsite numbers |
|-----------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Loon | O1-1 | 1 |
| Loon | O1-2 & 3 | 2 |
| Little Loon | P1 | 3 |
| Little Loon | P1 | 4 |
| Loon | O2 | 5 |
| Leon | N1 | 6 |
| Leon | N1 | 7 |
| Loon | O3 | 8 |
| Horseshoe | L7-1 | 9 |
| Horseshoe | L7-2 | 10 |
| Horseshoe | L7-3 | 11 |
| Horseshoe | L6 | 12 |
| Horseshoe | L5-1 | 13 |
| Horseshoe | L5-2 | 14 |
| Horseshoe | L4 | 15 |
| Horseshoe | L3 | 16 |
| Horseshoe | L1 | 17 |
| Horseshoe | L11 | 18 |
| Horseshoe | L10 | 19 |
| Horseshoe | L9 | 20 |
| Cibid | J1 | 21 |
| Cad | H1 | 22 |
| Topless | I1 | 23 |
| Upper Thompson | E7 | 24 |
| Upper Thompson | E6 (west) | 25 |
| Upper Thompson | E5 | 26 |
| Upper Thompson | E3 | 27 |
| Upper Thompson | E4 | 28 |
| Upper Thompson | E2-1 | 29 |
| Upper Thompson | E2-2 | 30 |
| Upper Thompson | E1 | 31 |
| Upper Thompson | E12 | 32 |
| Upper Thompson | E11-2 | 33 |
| Upper Thompson | E11-1 | 34 |
| Upper Thompson | E9 | 35 |
| Upper Thompson | E8 | 36 |
| Upper Thompson | E8 | 37 |
| Middle Thompson | D3 | 38 |
| Middle Thompson | D2 | 39 |

| Lake | Site | New campsite numbers |
|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Middle Thompson | D1-1 | 40 |
| Middle Thompson | D1-3 | 41 |
| Middle Thompson | D1-6 | 42 |
| Middle Thompson | D1-5 | 43 |
| Middle Thompson | D1-7 | 44 |
| Middle Thompson | D1-10 | 45 |
| Middle Thompson | D5 | 46 |
| Middle Thompson | D4 | 47 |
| Middle Thompson | D4 | 48 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-1 | 49 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-2 | 50 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-3 | 51 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-4 | 52 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-5 | 53 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-6 | 54 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-7 | 55 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-10 | 56 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-11 | 57 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-12 | 58 |
| Lower Thompson | C2-1 | 59 |
| Lower Thompson | C2-2 | 60 |
| Lower Thompson | C2-3 | 61 |
| Lower Thompson | C2-5 | 62 |
| Lower Thompson | C12 | 63 |
| Lower Thompson | C11-1 | 64 |
| Lower Thompson | C11-2 | 65 |
| Lower Thompson | C10 | 66 |
| Lower Thompson | C9 | 67 |
| Lower Thompson | C8-1 | 68 |
| Lower Thompson | C8-2 | 69 |
| Lower Thompson | C6-1 | 70 |
| Lower Thompson | C6-2 | 71 |
| Lower Thompson | C5 | 72 |
| Lower Thompson | C4-1 | 73 |
| Lower Thompson | C4-2 | 74 |
| Little McGregor | B1-1 | 75 |
| Little McGregor | B1-2 | 76 |
| Little McGregor | B1-3 | 77 |
| McGregor | A7 | 78 |
| McGregor | A6 | 79 |
| McGregor | A5 | 80 |

| Lake | Site | New campsite numbers |
|----------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| McGregor | A3 | 81 |
| McGregor | A2 | 82 |
| McGregor | A1 | 83 |
| Horseshoe | L8 | G1 |
| Horseshoe | L2 | G2 |
| Upper Thompson | E10 | G3 |
| Upper Thompson | E6 (east) | G4 |
| Lower Thompson | C3-8 & 9 | G5 |
| Lower Thompson | C1 | G6 |
| Lower Thompson | C7 | G7 |
| McGregor | A4 | G8 |

**Maximum of 2
Campers (or Tents) per site**

**Pay fees within 30 minutes
of arrival**



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

Group Site G1

- ◆ **Maximum Capacity is ____ campers or tents**
- ◆ **Pay \$40 for site, per night**
- ◆ **Pay fees within 30 minutes of arrival**
- ◆ **All vehicles, campers and tents must be within
campsite boundary**



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

Group Site G1

- ◆ **Maximum Capacity is ____ campers or tents**
- ◆ **Pay for every 2 campers (or tents), per night**
 - With a valid Montana Fishing License.....\$7
 - Without a valid Montana Fishing License.....\$12
 - Montana resident 62 & older or disabled resident.....1/2 price
- ◆ **Pay fees within 30 minutes of arrival**
- ◆ **All vehicles, campers and tents must be within
campsite boundary**



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

CAMPING FEES

Campsites 1 – 83

Maximum of 2 campers (or tents) per site

Pay per site, per night

With a valid MT Fishing License.....\$7

Without a valid MT Fishing License.....\$12

MT resident 62 & older or disabled resident.....1/2 price

.....

Group Sites G1 – G8

Maximum camper capacity posted at site

Pay per site, per night.....\$40

.....

Make Checks Payable to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

CAMPING FEES

Campsites 1 – 83 Pay per site, per night

Maximum of 2 campers (or tents) per site

With a valid MT Fishing License.....\$7

Without a valid MT Fishing License.....\$12

MT resident 62 & older or disabled resident.....1/2 price

.....

Group Sites G1 – G8

**Pay fee for every two campers or tents,
per night**

With a valid MT Fishing License.....\$7

Without a valid MT Fishing License.....\$12

MT resident 62 & older or disabled resident.....1/2 price

.....

Make Checks Payable to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

CAMPING FEES

Campsites 1 – 83

Pay per site, per night

Maximum of 2 campers (or tents) per site

.....

Group Sites G1 – G8

Pay per two campers (or tents), per night

.....

With a valid MT Fishing License.....\$7

Without a valid MT Fishing License.....\$12

MT resident 62 & older or disabled resident.....1/2 price

.....

Make Checks Payable to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

REGULATIONS

- ◆ **Pay fees within 30 minutes of arrival.**
- ◆ **Maximum of 2 campers (or tents) per site (#1 – 83).**
- ◆ **Maximum camper limit posted at each
group site (G1-G8).**
- ◆ **All RVs, trailers, campers, tents and vehicles must be
within campsite boundary.**
- ◆ **Checkout time is 2:00 pm.**
- ◆ **First Come, First Serve**
No Reservations and/or Saving Sites.
- ◆ **Campsites must be occupied nightly.**

***FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH
THESE REGULATIONS WILL RESULT IN A
CITATION AND/OR EXPULSION FROM THE
THOMPSON CHAIN OF LAKES COMPLEX***

APPENDIX K: PROPOSED BARRIER ROCK WORK PRIORITY CHART

| Lake | Site | # of barrier rocks needed | Barrier Rock Priority Level | Comments |
|----------------------|------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| McGregor Lake | A1 | 100 | medium | |
| | A2 | | low | |
| | A3 | | low | |
| | A4 | 100 | high | Group site |
| | A5 | | low | |
| | A6 | | low | |
| | A7 | 15 | medium | Eliminate lower road that parallels the lake, but leave boat access from campsite. |
| Little McGregor Lake | B1 | 0 | low | |
| Lower Thompson Lake | C1 | 60 | medium | |
| | C2 | | low | |
| | C3 | 350 | very high | Historically serious over capacity issues; adding a group site; block small road between #5 and #6; move site #2 to west. |
| | C4 | 0 | low | |
| | C5 | 0 | low | |
| | C6 | 123 | high | Historically serious over capacity issues. |
| | C7 | 60 | very high | Group site; block off steep entrance from ACM road; block off drive-up access to lake |
| | C8 | 87 | high | Create separate entrance for each site & rehab the road between the sites. |
| | C9 | 25 | low | |
| | C10 | 150 | high | High use early in season affects Loon nesting success |

| Lake | Site | # of barrier rocks needed | Barrier Rock Priority Level | Comments |
|----------------------|------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| | C11 | 120 | high | High use early in season affects Loon nesting success. |
| | C12 | 35 | medium | |
| Middle Thompson Lake | D1 | 250 | very high | Historically serious over capacity issues and with the removal of some sites is expected to be problematic. |
| | D2 | | low | |
| | D3 | | low | |
| | D4 | 31 | medium | |
| | D5 | 0 | low | |
| Upper Thompson Lake | E1 | 40 | high | Remove stumps on access road |
| | E2 | 69 | high | Continue hand boat launch opportunities. |
| | E3 | 30 | low | |
| | E4 | 50 | low | |
| | E5 | | low | |
| | E6 | 60 | very high | Divide to include a group site and one single site. |
| | E7 | 25 | low | |
| | E8 | 50 | high | Group site |
| | E9 | 0 | low | |
| | E10 | 43 | high | |
| | E11 | 25 | medium | |
| | E12 | 10 | low | |

| Lake | Site | # of barrier rocks needed | Barrier Rock Priority Level | Comments |
|------------------|------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Horseshoe Lake | L1 | 15 | medium | |
| | L2 | 42 | very high | Group site |
| | L3 | 12 | high | |
| | L4 | 0 | high | Need to remove several saplings to open site up. |
| | L5 | 8 | high | Road braiding is occurring. |
| | L6 | | low | |
| | L7 | 100 | high | Need stump removal; replant fire ring in site #2 to the west in order plant barrier rock and allow for site separation. |
| | L8 | | very high | Group site, rocks mostly in place. |
| | L9 | 0 | low | |
| | L10 | 0 | low | |
| | L11 | 20 | medium | |
| Topless Lake | I1 | 25 | low | |
| Cibid Lake | J1 | 2 | low | |
| Cad Lake | H1 | 8 | low | |
| Leon Lake | N1 | 100 | medium | |
| Loon Lake | O1 | 35 | medium | |
| | O2 | 0 | low | |
| | O3 | 4 | low | |
| Little Loon Lake | P1 | 100 | medium | |
| Totals | | 2379 | | |

APPENDIX L: ROAD INVENTORY AND PROPOSED WORK PRIORITIZATION

Road Issues and Priorities

Priority levels are determined by a combination of visitor comment cards and complaints, safety hazards, dust issues, and resource damage concerns.

Note: Roads are identified using the old alphanumeric system; however, if the plan is approved a new numbering system will be implemented.

McGregor Lake

Main Access Road for sites A1 thru A6

***Priority: High (entrance)
Medium (rest of the road)***

Discussion: The entrance to these sites creates a safety hazard at the junction with Highway 2. The entrance is steep, slanted, and meets the highway at an undesirable angle. A lack of visibility is resulting in hazardous conditions. The rest of the access road contains large potholes, some rutting, and dust issues in the dry summer months. Although the road is passable, it creates a nuisance to visitors.

A1/A2

Priority: Medium

Discussion: The spur road that leads into these sites is in fair condition, but could cause some erosion problems into the lake as a result of poor drainage. A determination needs to be made in regard to the validity of the loop road versus having a separate and distinct access spur for each site.

A7

Priority: Low

Discussion: This section of road was paved at one time and, although it could be improved in areas, it is a low use site and thus is a low priority. The entrance point of this road is also at an undesirable angle; however, it does not at this time pose a major safety hazard.

Little McGregor Lake

Priority: Low

Discussion: With the recent roadwork completed in conjunction with the campsite and boat ramp improvements, the site needs very little work.

Lower Thompson Lake

C1

Priority: Medium

Discussion: Severe rutting occurs in conjunction with snowmelt and spring rains. Road base and drainage improvements are required.

C2

Priority: Low

Discussion: The road in this site is relatively flat and does not create any safety hazards, but it does cause dust issues in the dry summer months. A small ledge does exist where the pavement meets the gravel.

C3 Peninsula**Priority: Medium**

Discussion: Besides some small potholes, the main issue is dust abatement.

C6**Priority: Low**

Discussion: The access road is relatively flat and does not need much work at this time.

C7**Priority: Low**

Discussion: Besides the steep entrance that needs to be removed, the access into the site is in fair condition and needs little work at this time.

C8**Priority: Medium**

Discussion: The site currently has two entrances, giving it a drive-through loop access. With the adoption of this update, the current site would become two separate sites with two separate entrances, and the connecting road would be blocked off and reclaimed. It would be ideal to perform this road maintenance at the same time the barrier work is completed. Each entrance would require minimal gravel, grading, and dust abatement.

C9**Priority: Medium**

Discussion: The road to this site is in relatively fair condition, other than some rutting on the hill portion and some dust issues.

C10**Priority: High**

Discussion: The access road that leads to site C10 and C11 creates major dust issues in the dry summer months. Traffic control barrier work and reseeding will assist in some areas with the dust; however, the whole road needs to have a solid base created and regular maintenance performed.

C11**Priority: High**

Discussion: There are two distinct sites within C11, and with the adoption of the updated management plan, these two sites will be separate. Currently the east site has a distinct entrance, while the west site has no feasible entrance. With the installation of barrier rocks to block off small side entrances to the site, a distinct entrance needs to be created by widening one of the existing roads. Dust is a continuing problem throughout this whole area; therefore gravel will probably need to be added to firm up the current road base.

C12**Priority: Low**

Discussion: The entrance to this site is relatively flat and does not currently create access issues.

ACM Road**Priority: Medium**

Discussion: Since this is an access road for many different properties, a continued cooperative effort needs to be made in regard to road maintenance and dust abatement.

Middle Thompson Lake

D1

Priority: Low

Discussion: The main problem that exists with the access to this site is the drop-off ledge that occurs in the transition from pavement to gravel. The ledge is fairly severe and although it does not prevent access to the site, it is a nuisance to visitors. The access points to each separate campsite within the area are in fair condition, but do create some dust issues.

D2

Priority: High

Discussion: This site is accessed through a loop road off of Highway 2. The western entrance road is in good condition and needs minimal work. The eastern entrance road, however, is severely rutted and almost impassable. In the wet spring months the mud is over a foot deep, which then dries and leaves deep ruts through the summer months. Erosion into the lake is a serious concern, even with the black particle fencing currently in place.

D3

Priority: Medium

Discussion: The current access to the site goes through a marshy area and was never developed to have an actual road base. Rutting has resulted from wet weather through the marsh area, while the rest of the road needs to be leveled for easier access.

D4

Priority: Low

Discussion: The access road to this site is in relatively good condition, but does present some dust issues and rutting. However, the overall condition does not make this a priority project.

Upper Thompson Lake

Main Access Road for sites E2 thru E7

Priority: High

Discussion: This access road is in very poor condition and only worsens each wet spring. There was never a solid road base built, thus severe potholes and ruts continue to grow in size and depth. Many sections of this road are almost impassable for trucks with trailers. Every spring the road fills with water, creating deep mud holes and serious visitor issues, especially since the heaviest visitation occurs in May and June.

E1

Priority: High

Discussion: Although this is a short access road into the site, it currently has serious problems with regard to rutting, potholes, and tree roots.

E2

Priority: High

Discussion: The access road that leads to this site crosses through a wetland marsh area and thus has serious rut and pothole issues. Currently, there are two roads that enter off the main road and join before entering the site. The optimal outcome would be to eliminate and reclaim one of the roads and rebuild the other to alleviate access issues, especially in the wet spring months.

E3/E4

Priority: High

Discussion: Even though this road is not as serious an issue as the road to E2, it still poses access problems due to severe potholes.

E11**Priority: Low**

Discussion: This access road is in fairly decent condition aside from a few potholes and does not require immediate attention at this time. The first portion of this road does cross into Plum Creek property.

E12**Priority: Low**

Discussion: This is an access road for other properties as well as for campsite E12. At this time the road is in good condition and only presents some dust issues.

Horseshoe Lake**Main Access Road for sites L1 to McKillop Road****Priority: Medium (whole road)
High (steep, rutted section)**

Discussion: Overall this road has a good road base and is in fair condition, with a few areas in poor condition. Some large potholes and rutting have occurred sporadically along the whole length of the road. The whole road is a single lane road with few, if any, pullout areas for passing. As a result many roadside areas have been pioneered, thus starting to create a maze of braided roads. In some areas, trees and bushes are starting to encroach on the roadway. Ideally, when roadwork is completed, trees and bushes need to be trimmed back or removed, and shoulder-passing areas need to be created and defined.

There is one section of road between L8 on Horseshoe Lake and O3 on Loon Lake that is a high priority. This particular section of road is fairly steep and has severe rutting and potholes. It is in such bad condition that a short side road around the area is being utilized instead. Besides being an irritant to visitors, this section of road is also a safety hazard.

L1**Priority: Low**

Discussion: This road is in good condition besides a few areas that could use better drainage.

L2/L3/L4**Priority: Low**

Discussion: The main problem with this spur road is that a few trees are very close to the road, thus making access difficult for trucks with trailers and RVs. The other problem is that there are approximately three different access points from the main road that all join the same spur road. There should be one main entrance/road into these sites, and the other entrances should be closed off and reclaimed.

L5**Priority: Low**

Discussion: This spur road is in good condition and needs no work at this time.

L7**Priority: Low**

Discussion: This spur road is in fair condition, with the main problems consisting of trees and stumps close to the road, two separate entrances that join the spur road, and tree roots crossing into the road. A determination needs to be made whether or not the two entrances need to exist or can be combined into one. Some rutting exists close to campsite L7.

L9**Priority: Low**

Discussion: The access to this site includes travel along the main road located east and south of Horseshoe Lake. This road is also used to access Plum Creek property and therefore has received some maintenance primarily consisting of grading. The road is in good condition, except for the presence of larger rocks that makes for bumpier travel, but present no significant safety hazard. The spur road that leads directly into the site is in fair condition, with the main issues consisting of rutting and a lack of proper drainage.

L11**Priority: Medium**

Discussion: The spur road that leads down into the campsite is in poor condition. Although it is only a short distance down into the site, erosion is a serious problem especially due to the proximity of the site to the lake. Currently two entrances exist, creating a small loop entrance/exit. Due to the condition of the northern entrance, it should be blocked off and reclaimed. The southern entrance should then be improved by removing some trees to accommodate larger rigs.

Loon Lake/Little Loon Lake**O1****Priority: Low**

Discussion: Roadwork was completed at this site in conjunction with the boat ramp improvement project a few years ago; therefore the road is in good condition. It does have a few potholes and should be regularly graded before more damage occurs.

P1**Priority: Medium**

Discussion: This spur road is in fair to poor condition. The road is drivable, but does contain some fairly severe ruts and potholes however. Drainage is an issue at the low point on this road, where the most severe rutting occurs.

Other Lakes (Cibid, Cad, Topless, Banana)**J1****Priority: Low**

Discussion: This spur road is in fair condition with a decent road base, but does have some potholes and ruts. However, since the use in this site is low, it is not a medium priority.

H1**Priority: Low**

Discussion: With this low use site, the current road condition is acceptable at this time. Some rutting is apparent, and small saplings are encroaching on the road.

I1**Priority: Low**

Discussion: The road to this site is in relatively good condition and, given the amount of use it receives, does not rank as a high or medium priority. Some road braiding occurs along with some encroaching saplings.